

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Tom Altken's poetry has appeared in the *New Zealand Listener*, the *New Zealand Monthly* and *Ambit*. Antony Beevor is the author of *The Spanish Civil War*, 1982.

T. J. Hinton is a Fellow and Tutor in Russian at Wadham College, Oxford.

Malcolm Bowie's *Marlaine and the Art of Being Difficult* was published in 1978.

Robin Buss is a lecturer in French at Woolwich College of Further Education.

Humphrey Carpenter's most recent book is *O. U. D. S.: A century history of the Oxford University Dramatic Society*, 1985. His next book, *Gentiles Together*, a study of American writers in Paris in the 1920s, will be published in the autumn.

Lesley Chamberlain's *Food and Cooking of Russia* was published in 1982.

Patricia Craig's biography of Elizabeth Bowen in the Penguin Lives of Modern Women series was published last year.

Rosemary Dinnage's *Annie Besant* appeared last year.

D. K. Fieldhouse is Smuts Professor-Elect of the History of the British Commonwealth at Cambridge. His most recent book is *Black Africa 1945-80: Economic decolonization and arrested development*, 1986.

J. In Foxhall teaches in the Department of Anthropology at University College London.

Roma Gill is the editor of *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe, Volume 1: Translations*, 1986.

Simon Green is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford.

Colin Greenland's latest novel is *The Hour of the Thin Ox*. He is the co-editor of *Storm Warnings: Science Fiction confronts the future*. Both books were published earlier this year.

John Harvey's *English Medieval Architecture* came out in an enlarged edition in 1984.

Dumde Hildebrand is the author of *Owen the Poet*, and editor (with John Onions) of *Poetry of the Great War: An anthology*, both of which appeared last year.

R. W. Johnson is a Fellow and Tutor in Politics at Magdalen College, Oxford. He is the author of *The Long March of the French Left*, 1981.

Nicola Lacey is a Senior Law Tutor at New College, Oxford.

Angela Leighton is a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Hull. She is the author of *Shelley and the Sublime: An interpretation of the major poems*, 1984.

Philip Lindley is a Research Fellow at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. His book *Ely Cathedral c. 1320-1350* will be published shortly.

Hugh Lloyd-Jones is Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford. His most recent book is *Collected Essays on the Classics of Tradition*, 1980.

John McManis is Regius Professor Emeritus of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Oxford. His *Death and the Enlightenment* was published in 1981.

Helen McNell teaches English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia. Her *Emily Dickinson* has just been published.

Lady Mander's books include *Mrs Browning*, 1980.

Ruth McVey is the editor of *Indonesia*, 1984.

Wilfred Mellers is the author of *Angels of the Night: Popular female singers of our time*, 1986.

Simon Pepper is a lecturer in Architecture at the University of Liverpool. He is co-author (with Nicholas Adams) of *Fluents and Fortifications: Military architecture and siege warfare in sixteenth-century Siena*, 1986.

Frederic Raphael is the author of *Somerset Maugham and his World*, 1977, and *Byron*, 1982. His most recent novel is *Think of England*, 1986.

Anthony Sattin is the editor of Florence Nightingale's *Letters from Egypt: A journey on the Nile, 1849-1850*, which will be published in October.

William St Clair is the author of *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, 1987 and *That Greece Might Still be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence*, 1972.

John Sutherland is Professor in the Division of Humanities, California Institute of Technology. His most recent book is *Offensive Literature: Decency in Britain, 1960-1982*, 1982.

J. C. H. Thompson's *Orwell's London* appeared in 1984.

John Weightman is the author of *The Concept of the Avant-Garde: Explorations in Modernism*, 1973.

Hugo Williams's most recent book of poems, *Writing Home*, was published in 1985.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 340
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 21. A prize of £30 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 340" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 28.

1 And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory, lying down in the melting snow.

2 "Take my camel, dear," said my aunt Dot, as she climbed down from this animal on her return from High Mass.

3 "Camel Ride to the Tomb?" said Rosie. "I thought it so good."

Competition No 336
Winner: David Sansone
Answers:

1 It is a game too troublesome for some men's

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of July 31, 1937, carried a review of Franz Borkenau's *The Spanish Cockpit and Ramon J. Sender's The War in Spain: A personal narrative, from which the following extracts are taken:*

... Dr. Borkenau gets a long way towards achieving impartiality. ... [He] writes as a sociologist; and as far as field work is concerned, his attitude is rather that of a man with a magnifying glass observing the habits of an insect colony. Unfortunately this profession of detachment told against him with the Government's supporters in the long run, just as it did with the Nationalists from the beginning: he was unable to get into General Franco's territory at all, and on his second visit to Valencia, by the time he had been subjected to repeated questionings and a night in prison, he judged it expedient to come home. ... events have revealed the inherent weakness of the extreme Left in actually carrying out a policy of spontaneous cooperation; and on his second visit he found the chaos of those early months,

brains, too, two testy full of anxiety, all out as bad a study; besides, it is a choleric game and very offensive to him that lonseth the Mate. William the Conqueror in his younger years, playing at Chess with the Prince of France ... losing a line, knocked the Chessboard about his pate, which was cause afterward of much enmity between them.

Richard Burton, *An Anatomy of Melancholy*

2 1. P-K4 (b)
2. Kt-KR3
3. R-KKt1
4. Kt-QB3
5. Kt-Q5 (c)
Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*

3 She hung up and I set out the chessboard. I flung pipe, paraded the chessmen and inspected the French shaves and loose buttons, and played a championship tournament game between Gorbokoff and Meninkin, seventy-two moves to a draw, a prize specimen of the irresistible force meeting the immovable object, a battle without armour, a war without blood, and as elaborate a waste of human intelligence as you could find anywhere outside an advertising agency.

Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*

when local anarchist influences were supposed to be in every sector, giving way to a repressive bureaucratic dictatorship controlled by the Comintern. ... Mr. Sender has been detailing the Republic in the trenches. Here the scientist and his magnifying glass are forgotten. We see life-sized men and women, people as might be ourselves, enjoying their summer holidays, one day and the day after, not knowing whether they can set foot out of door without being shot in the back by their next-door neighbours. Then come the long months of fighting and hunger and bitter cold as broiling heat, without any promise of an end beyond the passionate conviction that the cause is just and that justice must finally prevail: stories of heroism and brotherhood that invest the defence of Madrid with nobility. ... If this book contains any outstanding warning. ... It is against the habit of condoning oppression simply because it happens to be carried out by forces that proclaim themselves those of law and order.

PHILOSOPHY

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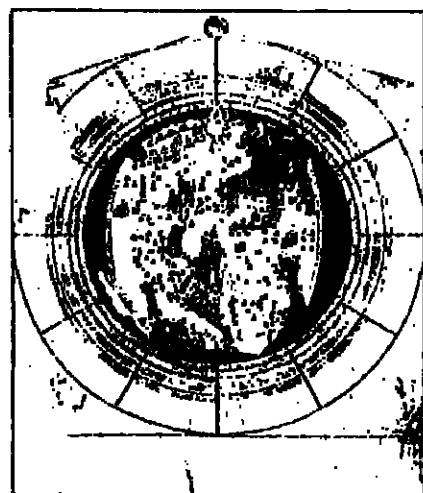
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Emil Nolde's "Papaus (Angling)", 1914, reproduced from Martin Urban's *Emil Nolde: Catalogue raisonné of the oil-paintings, Volume One: 1895-1914* (604pp, with 80 colour and 700 black-and-white illustrations, Sotheby's, £97.50, (085667320 X), which will be reviewed in a later issue of the TLS.

Making the best of utilitarianism

Samuel Scheffler

JAMES GRIFFIN
Well-Being: Its meaning, measurement and moral importance
412pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £27.50.
0 19 824903 9

No moral theory arouses stronger passions than utilitarianism. Indeed, the intensity of contemporary debates about utilitarianism is sufficiently marked to present something of a puzzle. For, first, if even half of the charges made by critics of the theory are justified, it would seem that only a moral idiot could accept it. In point of fact, however, utilitarianism, in one form or another, continues to command the deep and unwavering support of many intelligent and morally serious people. This might lead one to conclude, alternatively, that the critics are simply mistaken. But the critics include equally intelligent and morally serious people. So if one concludes that the continuing support for utilitarianism is best explained on the supposition of its genuine theoretical merit, one is left with the question of why so many thoughtful people remain so utterly and relentlessly unconvinced of its moral appeal.

The puzzle, in other words, is why a particular abstract view about the content of morality should simultaneously inspire such determined support and such fierce opposition among thoughtful and morally reflective people, all of whom possess moral sensibilities shaped through participation in a shared culture. Part of the answer is this. At the core of utilitarianism is a very simple and seductive idea: namely, that so far as morality is concerned, what people ought to do is to maximize good and minimize evil, to try, in other words, to make the world as good a place as possible. Granted only the plausible assumption that good is morally preferable to evil, this idea seems simply to embody the principle that we should maximize the desirable and minimize the undesirable, and that principle in turn seems to lie at the heart of our conception of practical rationality. At the same time, however, it appears remarkably easy to show that the most familiar versions of utilitarianism have implications that clash dramatically with some of our firmest ethical convictions. As a result, the very existence of utilitarianism seems to reveal a conflict between fundamental norms of rationality which we operate with all the time

and moral values to which we are deeply committed. Viewed in this light, the intensity of the debate about utilitarianism looks suddenly unsurprising.

There are several possible responses to this apparent conflict between our canons of rationality and our commonsensical moral values. Utilitarians themselves tend to argue that our common-sense values can to a great degree be reconciled with utilitarian principles, so that the appearance of conflict is largely illusory. Of course, they often add, to the extent that such reconciliation is impossible, what this shows is the need for revision in our ordinary moral thought. There is an important distinction to be made, however, between those who think that what our common-sense values can largely be reconciled with is utilitarianism in one of its familiar traditional forms, and those who think that the theory must be developed in new ways if it is to accommodate all that it should accommodate in our moral thinking. Those who hold the latter view should find James Griffin's book particularly congenial.

Griffin does not explicitly represent himself as a defender of utilitarianism. The declared topic of his book is not utilitarianism but *well-being*, whose meaning, measurement and moral importance, respectively, are the concerns of the book's three parts. However, well-being is itself a central preoccupation of utilitarianism, which in its classical form tells us to maximize the net balance of good over evil, and identifies goodness in the relevant sense with the well-being of people or sentient creatures more generally. Moreover, Griffin locates his own account of well-being within the utilitarian tradition, and while he is critical of the standard utilitarian positions on many issues, it is clear that he nevertheless finds a broadly utilitarian framework more attractive than any of the leading competitors. In the third part of the book he discusses a number of moral concerns - including equality, fairness, rights, desert and distributive justice - which many people have viewed utilitarianism as unable to accommodate adequately. His goal is to investigate the extent to which these concerns can be brought 'within the ambit of well-being', and his conclusion is that the extent to which they can is considerable. What this means, I take it, is that in Griffin's view more of the resources necessary for an adequate treatment of these topics can be derived from an enlightened utilitarianism than from any other single theoretical source.

The centrepiece of Griffin's analysis is his account of what human well-being consists in. Within utilitarianism, there are two dominant traditions about well-being. One tradition associates it with the experiencing of pleasurable mental states and the avoidance of painful ones. The other tradition takes well-being to be a matter of having one's desires or preferences satisfied. Griffin defends a version of the desire view, but his version has some distinctive twists. He identifies well-being with the satisfaction of *informed* desires, and what counts as an informed desire turns out to be a fairly complicated matter. Most notably, informed desires 'have to be shaped by appreciation of the nature of their objects'. As Griffin points out, the imposition of this requirement raises the question whether the satisfaction of an informed desire enhances one's well-being because the satisfaction of the desire is a good *per se*, or instead because the object of the desire has an independent value, to which the presence of the desire merely attests. Are the objects of desire valuable because they are desired, or are they desired because they are valuable?

Utilitarians who accept the desire view typically have in mind the first of these options, but Griffin refuses to choose. He argues at some length that the dichotomy is a false one, which grows ultimately out of an equally false and vastly influential dualism about reason and desire. The notion of an informed desire, as Griffin intends it, is meant precisely to straddle these and other associated distinctions, such as the distinction between subjective and objective accounts of well-being.

Pursuing this interesting line of argument, he maintains that an informed-desire account of well-being differs from the two traditional utilitarian accounts in a number of crucial respects. First, on the informed-desire account there are certain values - he lists accomplishment, autonomy, liberty, understanding, enjoyment and 'deep personal relations', among others - that are values for everyone. In this respect the view is closer to what are usually presented as 'objective' accounts of well-being than it is to either of the traditional utilitarian theories. Second, because informed desires include desires for complex, temporally extended goods, like some of those listed above, they themselves have a complex hierarchical structure, and it is implausible to think of the maximization of one person's good as consisting in the aggregation of small, short-term utilities. Maximization must instead be under-

stood by reference to the structure of informed desires and to the valued items which are their objects. And, finally, it is those valued items themselves, on the informed-desire view, that provide the framework for making comparisons of the well-being of different people.

Given these features of the informed-desire account, it is clear that a utilitarianism which incorporates such an account will differ significantly from forms of the theory that rely on one of the traditional utilitarian views of well-being. However, some of the most troubling features of utilitarianism appear, on the surface at any rate, to be independent of its account of individual well-being. For example, many people feel that utilitarianism's concern with the overall optimality of the states of affairs that obtain in the world makes it excessively tolerant of trade-offs in which the interests of some people are sacrificed in order to promote the interests of others. And many people also believe that, because of its overriding concern with maximization and its failure to attach any direct importance to values like fairness, utilitarianism is objectionably sympathetic to the practice of *free-riding*: that is, failing to contribute one's time, effort, money, or self-restraint to a co-operative scheme from which one benefits, provided that enough others are contributing to make the scheme work anyway, and that failing to contribute will maximally enhance one's own position.

Griffin makes a rather ingenious proposal about how utilitarian doctrine might be extended, in a manner consistent with the spirit of the theory, so as to yield a solution to the free-rider problem. And, in the course of his discussions of fairness and rights, he suggests that there are in fact a number of restrictions on trade-offs which, to one degree or another, can be derived from the conception of individual well-being he has argued for, and which an enlightened utilitarian could accept. The first of his suggestions for limiting trade-offs begins with the observation that, given his conception of individual well-being, the maximization of the overall good should not be thought of as a matter of the aggregation of short-term feelings or utilities, any more than the maximization of the individual good should. And the simple abandonment of this crude aggregative model serves to eliminate some of the objectionable trade-offs licensed by traditional forms of utilitarianism. The second suggestion also depends straightforwardly on Griffin's conception of individual well-being. The idea

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is that, in the individual case, there may be certain limited forms of incommensurability among the values that contribute to well-being, and that in interpersonal contexts the effect of these incommensurabilities may be to rule out trade-offs of certain kinds.

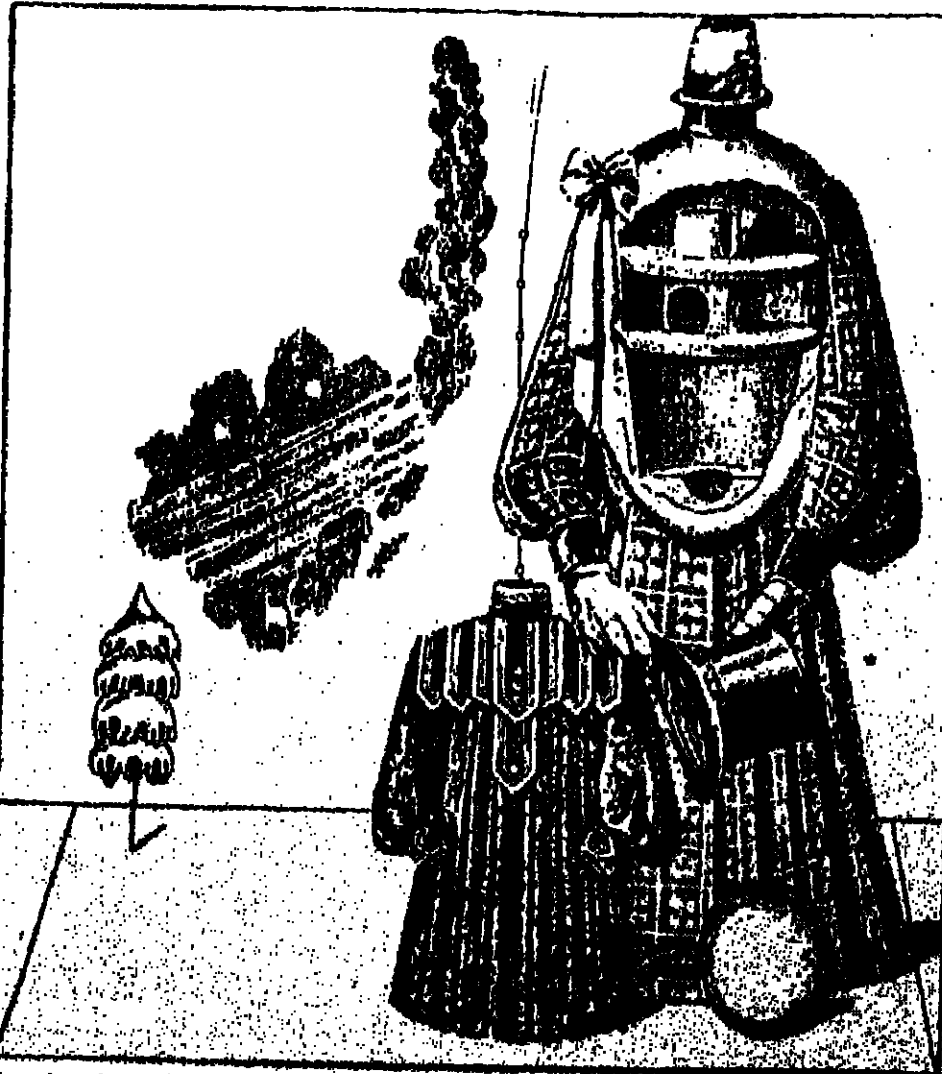
Griffin's last suggestion involves his idea that morality may usefully be thought of as a "multi-level structure", consisting of (1) a general criterion of right and wrong action, (2) a "practical decision procedure", which tells us how to decide what to do when we are operating under the normal constraints and limitations of everyday life, (3) a "reflective decision procedure" to guide our thinking in exceptional cases when the normal constraints are lacking, and (4) a "political decision procedure" for resolving questions at the social level. Griffin argues that pure act-by-act maximization, which gives the greatest scope for the utilitarian trade-offs that critics have objected to, is for the most part appropriate only in the abstract, at the level of the criterion of right action. In practice, when an individual or a society must make a decision, such maximization will be appropriate far less often. In the case of individuals, this is partly because we typically lack the time and information necessary to make sound judgments about maximization, but it is also because the nature of at least some of the values that contribute to human well-being is such that an agent cannot realize those values and still maintain a policy of act-by-act maximization.

There are some important respects in which the suggestions just outlined, interesting though they are, are not developed by Griffin as fully as one would like. Three examples: First, he provides only a sketchy account of the kinds of trade-off that might be ruled out by appeal to incommensurabilities. Second, the way that rights function within the multi-level structure is not described in any detail. We are told that rights of various kinds will have roles to play in the practical, reflective and political decision procedures, and that the role of particular rights will differ from level to level, but we are not left with a very clear sense of how those different roles are to be co-ordinated, or of which trade-offs the rights will permit and which they will prohibit. Third, Griffin does not say enough about the kind of moral psychology required by the "multi-level" picture. He denies that such a picture forces one to view one's own personal commitments instrumentally, but his argument is not fully convincing, in part because it appeals to the intrinsic prudential value of such commitments, and thus fails to engage doubts arising from the fact that the regulative aim of the multi-level structure is the maximization of

the overall good, not the maximization of one's own well-being. This fact seems sometimes to recede so far into the background of the multi-level structure as to vanish into virtual insignificance, and as with other vanishing acts one is left wondering how the trick has been accomplished.

Because Griffin's discussion is in these and other respects incomplete, and even occasionally elusive, it is difficult finally to judge the extent to which his arguments can succeed in narrowing the gap between an enlightened utilitarianism and our common-sense moral views. Clearly, however, those arguments have some force, and that the discussion is incomplete is not altogether unconnected to one of the book's main virtues. Utilitarianism notoriously appeals to people who bring to moral philosophy a love of system and

simplicity. There is therefore a tendency in some utilitarian writings to neglect or deny the complexity of ethical thought and practice. James Griffin, by contrast, is alive to this complexity, and he is far more concerned to sort through the full range of relevant considerations than he is to provide a definitive summing-up or to advance an attractively packaged conclusion. As a result he has produced a book which surely does not contain the last word on any of the issues it addresses, but which does offer thoughtful and often illuminating reflection about each of those issues, and in so doing suggests a more sensitive and less doctrinaire utilitarianism than many have thought possible. To the extent that even this utilitarianism conflicts with moral views that we feel strongly about, the conflict is bound to be that much more troubling.



From the series of collages *Les Malheurs des Immortels*, by Paul Eluard, illustrated by Max Ernst, sold on July 2, at Sotheby's, London, for £495.

In pursuit of freedom

Mary Tiles

ROY BHASKAR
Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation
308pp. Verso. £29.95 (paperback, £9.95).
086091 1438

Roy Bhaskar's basic message is that a civilized survival for the human species depends on the effective displacement of the false, positivist image of science by the transcendental realism inherent in actual scientific practice. It is unfortunate, therefore, that he does not present his case in a more effective way. Its principal components link together to form a fairly sturdy, self-supporting and exciting structure. The argument involves many stages and must inevitably be complex. Bhaskar's actual presentation, however, suggests that his aim is to prevent arcane knowledge falling into the hands of those not initiated into the mysteries of high academic philosophy of science.

In broad outline his argument goes as follows. A civilized survival for the human species is dependent on its members being in a position to embark on a process of self-transformation that will make them more fully human - ie, on a course of self-emancipation. Emancipation is defined as transformation from an unwanted and unneeded to a wanted and needed determination. This definition is in turn derived from a tripartite definition of freedom according to which being free requires that one know

what one's real interests are; that one possess the ability, resources and opportunity to act in pursuit of those interests; and that one be disposed to act in this way. The definition of freedom involves a commitment to realism in the human sciences, for it implies that there is an account to be given of a person's real interests and that these may not coincide with what he thinks his interests to be. Freedom is thus conditional upon knowledge - knowledge acquired in the human sciences, whose function will be both to disclose real interests and to yield an understanding of the ways in which, and the reasons why, these may be hidden from us. Only such an explanation can point to the kind of transformations, social and individual, which will be emancipatory.

Again, it is an essential condition both of this kind of knowledge, and of its playing the emancipatory role assigned to it, that individual human agents be conceived as neither completely determined by, nor as completely determining, social forms. People may have only a limited understanding of the social and biological worlds which partially determine them. But scientific knowledge, whether in the natural or human sciences, can have an emancipatory potential only to the extent that human agents have the power to transform the world in which they find themselves. Here it is clear that the human sciences are required to be sciences in the same sense as the natural sciences (this is the case which Bhaskar set out at length in *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 1975).

Moreover, the possibility of a naturalism of the right sort itself requires us to reject positivism ("which reflects in an endless hall of mirrors the self-image of Bourgeois Man. It is, one might say, the house-philosophy of the bourgeoisie"). Both the human and natural sciences have to be seen as concerned to achieve an understanding of the underlying causal structures that produce phenomena, not with their mere categorization and regularities.

Having shown why positivism is to be rejected, Bhaskar then demonstrates his own prescription at work, in the form of an explanation of why it is that positivism has had, and still has such a powerful hold. This is the task of the third and perhaps most readable of the book's three chapters.

The first chapter, on scientific realism, is virtually unintelligible, the discussion being conducted in the stratosphere of abstraction. It has all the apparatus of rigour and exactitude - technical jargon, numerical distinctions of points and positions, diagrams, acronyms - but seems then simply to free-wheel in a fundamentally unstructured way. It bears also the hall-marks of heavy word-processing, including proof-reading by spelling checker (resulting in delightfully quaint but dubiously significant phrases such as "the observe of this is..." or "Nor am I excluding the possibility of..."). There is much that is valuable in this book, but I wish it had been written in a way that made it more accessible to the general reader and less easy for critics to dismiss.

In the forum

Philip Pettit

AGNES HELLER
Beyond Justice
346pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.
0631 152067

The best of *Beyond Justice* comes at the end. The final chapter offers a personal and quite interesting sketch of the elements of the good life, while the second to last chapter develops a view, roughly on lines laid out by Habermas, of the procedurally just society.

This view is republican - the term is mine, not Agnes Heller's - whereas the dominant viewpoint in most contemporary discussions is liberal. The liberal approach assumes that just institutions must be capable of operating properly, even if people always take their decisions on self-regarding or sectional grounds. The republican line assumes, on the contrary, that in order to have a just society we must have citizens who exhibit appropriate forms of civic virtue.

Liberals look for institutions which, like market or pluralist structures, are designed to snatch the satisfaction of shared interests out of the pursuit of sectional aims. Republicans look for institutions which will have a psychologically deeper effect, filtering out self-regarding interests and transforming private individuals into citizens whose focal concern is the public good. Following Habermas, Heller sees the prototype of such institutions in the forum of discourse where parties are required, if they are to have any hope of persuading the representatives of other camps, not to invoke their merely sectional interests.

This picture of the forum needs to be defended against the economist's representation of discussion as simply a means for identifying the relative prices of the concessions which parties are willing to trade. Heller does not try to do this explicitly but she is at least sensitive to the difference, as she puts it, between discourse and negotiation. I would like to have seen something further on this divide.

But if the presentation of a republican viewpoint gives some interest to this book, there is much to put in the other pan of the scales. The book, particularly the first four chapters, is cumbersome and sometimes opaque. Terms and distinctions, often borrowed from analytical philosophers, are introduced without attempts at definition. The linking of the chapters is left unclear. And the sheer elusiveness of the argument sometimes borders on the comic.

Of course, Rawls hid the rabbit under the top hat (this time called the "veil of ignorance") in order to conjure it out again, but all his critics do likewise. Nothing is wrong with this magic, for it is the magic of philosophy. However, if we reflect on the history of our consciousness, we must be aware that we in fact have put the rabbit under the hat, because we consider it a valuable rabbit. And then the questions arise. What kind of rabbit should go under the hat? Why is one rabbit more valuable than another? Do we have a yardstick to compare the relative values of these rabbits?

There are other, more serious grounds for complaint. One is that Heller makes extraordinary historical claims, such as that all modern values are based on the values of freedom and life. How can she say this, when probably the dominant political philosophy of the past two centuries has been utilitarianism?

Even on ground where she is acknowledged as expert, her judgments are sometimes strange. She suggests, for example, that Habermas in his earlier work did not see the principle of universalization as implicit in ethical argument. But it is clear from his 1973 paper on theories of truth that he did. This is disingenuous of her to suggest that his critics, herself included, have driven Habermas to invoke this principle only recently.

Apart from her historical judgments, her arguments leave much to be desired. She sometimes claims to have proved things which have not been established by any standards known to me. Equally often she sets out with great seriousness to prove things which her definitions render tautological.

Beyond Justice comes from a corner in contemporary political thinking which deserves a better press. Unfortunately this book is not going to win that press. It may even give its corner a bad name.



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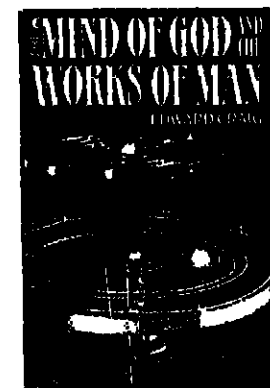
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Severed from rootlessness

Peter Kemp

V.S. NAIPAUL.
The Enigma of Arrival
318pp. Viking. £10.95.
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PEGGY NIGHTINGALE
Journey through Darkness: The writing of V.S. Naipaul
255pp. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press. Paperback, £16.50.
07022 20167

One day, V.S. Naipaul's father looked into the mirror and saw no one there. An earlier traumatic loss of face apparently lay behind this experience, which heralded a nervous breakdown: an irreverently campaigning reformer and scolder of superstitions, he had been terrorized by more orthodox fellow Hindus into beholding a goat as a sacrifice to Kali. The work of his son — who recounts all this in *Finding the Centre* — often reflects a similar fear of losing identity. Regarding his writing as a way of allaying this dread, Naipaul suggests that both impulses were a legacy from his father: awakening literary ambitions in his son, he also imbued him with "fear of extinction". That fear, Naipaul remarks, "could only be combated by the exercise of the vocation". This is what his latest novel, *The Enigma of Arrival*, explores.

Naipaul has produced both fiction and non-fiction for more than a quarter of a century now. The links between them have been close. Articles he published in *The Sunday Times* about Michael X and the Black Power killings in Trinidad metamorphosed into *Guerrillas*, his fierce fiction about a homicidal "revolutionary" in the West Indies; "A New King for the Congo", reporting on Mobutu's Zaire for the *New York Review of Books*, supplied the basis for his finest novel, *A Bend in the River*. Further weakening the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, many of Naipaul's

novels appear heavily autobiographical. Habitually, they focus on restless, rootless colonialists, often with a pen in their hand, who act as surrogates for the author. *The Enigma of Arrival* takes this a stage further. Though its subtitle insists that it is "a novel in five sections", it reads as something scarcely fictional. Even more than the "Prologue to an Autobiography" in *Finding the Centre*, it seems an exercise in self-assessment.

Self-scrutiny can easily become self-regard — something Naipaul has been accused of in the past. Here, self-pity sometimes seems dangerously close. When the novel opens, its unnamed narrator — having just moved into new quarters — experiences days of such heavy rain that he "could hardly see where [he] was". For much of the book, he stays shut in by damp mists of despondency. Uninterrupted introspection is the norm in what can be a morbidly solipsistic work.

Solitude has always rather scaled off Naipaul's protagonists. Even his jaunty first book, *Miguel Street* — typed in a crowded office when he was working for the BBC Caribbean Service in Langham Place — conveys a sense of loneliness. On the surface, its Trinidad street community is extrovert, swarming, warm, noisy and nosy. But links in the ramshackle society portrayed are loose: at the end of almost every chapter, someone drifts away. Feuds and resentments split the togetherness. Many of Miguel Street's inhabitants — such as the two central figures who clownishly model themselves on Humphrey Bogart and Rex Harrison — are removed from others behind a carapace of eccentricity. Even the book's format — each chapter comprising a separate story that singles out a different individual for inspection — operates a sort of segregation. At the end, the narrator, always on the edge of things, leaves alone for England. Typically, when Naipaul in *Finding the Centre* tells of tracking down the original of one of the *Miguel Street* characters in later life, their reunion — which the man tries to dodge — reveals present distance, not past intimacy.

Being lonely in a crowd is the standard plight in Naipaul. His travelogues characteristically show him as a harassed misfit in teeming, often over-populated societies, and silhouette cameos of dissident individuals against a canvas of mass-movements and herd-responses. In the Naipaul novel that is most packed with people, *A House for Mr Biswas*, the hero — his fictional version of his father — is rarely alone and almost always lonely. Marriage into an extended, almost tribal, devoutly reactionary Hindu family pushes this progressive, rationalistic man in on himself. Irately expressed irony and intelligence cut him off from those around him until he seems a foreigner in his own home and often absents himself from it.

Elsewhere, a string of exiles, expatriates and hotel-dwellers file their solitary way through Naipaul's narratives. Some of his liveliest shorter pieces are stories which consist of monologues delivered by displaced persons: a Hindu who has converted to Presbyterianism, a Bombay domestic transported to Washington, a West Indian adrift in England.

Two of these telling tales appear in the collection *In a Free State*. And the title novella in that book works particularly bleak variations on the theme of lack of rapport, as a couple of formerly casual acquaintances, Bobby and Linda, are flung together on a risky journey through a newly independent African country riven by civil war. Penned together in a car that is hemmed in by thick forest and torrential rain, they still stay worlds apart. Bobby, a comely paternalistic homosexual keen on African boys, quivers with antipathy at evidence of Linda's sexual hunger; she recoils in embarrassment from his attempted confidences. Outside, the tribal violence they're trying to escape highlights the frailness and artificiality of their colonial connections with the country. By the time of Naipaul's next novel, *A Bend in the River*, the picture has darkened further: now it's an African who is finally dispossessed and on the run from other Africans.

The narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* is also a refugee and living in "a kind of limbo". Born into the colonial world of Trinidad, he was reared, he explains, among his Hindu minority — plucked from their peasant life in India, several generations back, and transferred to

the West Indies as indentured labour. All this sounds exactly like Naipaul's own autobiography, as does what follows. A scholarship takes the narrator from this disoriented community to the "dreariness" of Oxford and the "greater dreariness" of metropolitan bed-sitter life. Severed from a rootless background, he has sought revitalization in travel. But years of journeying and journal-keeping have taken their toll. Worn down by them, he is devastated when a publisher scorns a historical enterprise — sounding like Naipaul's *The Loss of El Dorado* — on which he has lavished time and energy. After collapsing into deathly depression, he takes refuge, almost at random, in a rented cottage on what was once a great Edwardian estate in Wiltshire. As he recuperates, he fights off — by taking stock of his past and working on some new books — feelings that he has become immaterial.

When not mulling over his career, the narrator mooches round the vicinity and surveys in minute detail the two houses he successfully inhabits. Like much of the novel, this seems an extension and enlargement of what earlier works have done. Place has invariably obsessed this chronicler of displacement; houses have always been symbolic structures in his fiction. It's no accident that the title of his first novel should have put its emphasis on location (*Miguel Street*), or that his evocation of his family's Trinidadian past should be called *A House for Mr Biswas*. Each section of the latter novel, in fact, is built around an edifice: Hanuman House, aptly named after the monkey-god, where the chattering Tulsi family teem; The Chase, a decrepit store; Green Vale, a labourers' barracks; and so on. Epitomizing Naipaul's view of colonial society, when Mr Biswas — after a transient's life in other people's properties — at last acquires a house of his own, it is jerry-built, precarious, a rickety parody of grand European premises.

Buildings often signal the state of a society in Naipaul's work. Crumbling foreign styles of architecture — a battered *belle époque* bridge in Montevideo, Belgian villas reverting to bush settlements in the Congo — stand as reminders of what has happened to colonialism. In revolutionary Iran, it is explained to him, there is to be purely Islamic architecture with "water closets . . . so arranged as to make the seat not to face the City of Mecca either from his front or back side".

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the landed mansion standing at the centre of the story is seen as the image of Edwardian spaciousness and security. Formerly, with the exception of his off-centre-seeming English novel, *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*, Naipaul has scrutinized what he regards as hastily flung up and now tumbledown post-colonial societies: West Indian islands mouldering into mob violence, South American nations succumbing to bankruptcy and anarchy, African upheaval, Middle and Far Eastern countries in desperate ferment. Now, the colonial situates himself at what he sees as the heart of the old Empire. Where impermanence and lack of tradition tormented him on his travels, fixity and inherited responses eventually provide solace here.

Ironically, Naipaul's pilgrimage in *An Area of Darkness* to what he had thought of as his true cultural home, "ancestral" India, dealt him his greatest shock of dislocation. Hoping to find a society endowed with a completeness and shape lacking in the muddle of Trinidad, he encountered chaos on a subcontinental scale: devoid of genuine coherence, he came to think, the nation disastrously kow-towed to the parody principles of caste and taboo. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, he finds himself feeling most at home where he might least have expected to be. In contrast to the crude and un-mellowed colonial societies he has described in book after book, he explores an environment where everything rests on a rich substratum of antiquity. Here, almost uniquely in his writings, people "still have the idea of being successors and inheritors". The landscape is as much a matter of history as geography. Barrows and tumuli gently obtrude. The old wagon and coach roads are still open. A Victorian church looms from a pre-medieval foundation.

Everything is encrusted, moreover, with a patina of cultural associations. The water-meadows outside his windows suggest, Constable; the river-bank scenery recalls illustrations to *The Wind in the Willows*. A short stroll

turns the narrator's thoughts to Camelot and *King Lear*. Gray's "Elegy" and Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" superimpose themselves on the rural prospects. A local labourer is "a Wordsworthian figure"; his firewood-toting dog is "Wordsworthian" too.

So entranced is the author by these bookish analogues that it's quite hard for the locals to gain access to the book in their own right. Generally, they're contemplated through a haze of literary or historical cross-reference — taking to an extreme Naipaul's penchant for seeing people almost entirely as products of their culture. When the narrative sporadically tries to give the characters independent life, it does so by injections of sensationalism. A suddenly sexy woman observed sunbathing in a cottage garden runs away from her home with a central-heating contractor, we're abruptly informed; just as abruptly, she returns to her husband; then — in a sudden stab of melodrama — it's announced that he has murdered her with a kitchen knife.

This outburst of gory carnality among minor characters adds no real body to the book's wraith-like social scenes. But it's typical that sex should breed calamity (another strand of narrative tells of a local housewife's descent into near-dementia after her husband takes up with a "fancy woman"). Marriages — from the bigamy and wife-beatings of *Miguel Street* onwards — have always appeared unappealing in Naipaul's books. The big mistake made by the elderly bachelor hero of *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* is to try to fend off feelings of disorientation brought on by his retirement from work by wedding a highly unrefining widow. An Indian in one story believes he has lost his soul by marrying a black woman in order to avoid deportation from America. In another, a West Indian horrified watches his brother walk down the aisle with a girl "in white . . . like somebody dead".

Affairs and casual sex emerge as equally unalluring. Salim, in *A Bend in the River*, has joyless sessions with prostitutes, like numerous Naipaul protagonists, and even the more passionate relationship he has with a Belgian expatriate, Yvette, ends in brutality and ugliness: he batters her face and "spat on her between her legs until [he] had no more spit". Homosexuals fare no better: when Bobby of *In a Free State* accosts a young African, "the Zulu spat in his face".

In Naipaul's anaphrodisiac world, sexual let-down lurks everywhere. A recurrent source of erotic dismay, for instance, is the smallness of European women's breasts. The "poor little breasts" attached to emancipated neurotics receive frequent pitying notice. Scornful attention is drawn to the "topless breastless" women tourists sunbathing in an African hotel. The "self-supporting cut apples of the austere French ideal" are dismissed as utterly untempting by the exiled West Indian politician, Ralph Singh, in *The Mimic Men*, who "could have stayed for ever at a woman's breasts, if they were full and had a hint of weight that required support". But, when he marries a woman equipped with breasts of this brand, and painted nipples, he discovers that her voluptuous rejoicing in her female contours stems from secret lesbianism. A bizarre final scene administers further aversion therapy for his preference: as an apparently curvaceous prostitute undresses for him, her breasts "cascaded heavily down. They were enormous, they were grotesque, empty starved sacks . . . wide flabby scabbards which hung down to her middle".

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, where a heterosexual commits murder and a homosexual commits suicide, the central figure wisely remains celibate. The book symbolically pairs him, though, with another solitary. His landlord, the estate-owner, is, it transpires, a homosexual recluse. And though he and the narrator never meet — gifts of a sandalwood fan, incense sticks and Beardsley-like drawings dispatched from the big house are the nearest they come to this — he is presented as an inveterate image of his tenant. "An empire lay between us", ruminates the author. Pat antitheses stretch between them too. One man is homosexual, imperialist, a dilettante; the other is heterosexual, colonial, a professional writer. Fascinated by the landed patrician, the uprooted Brahmin broods, in passages of elegant, lapidary prose, over contrasting symmet-

ries in their lives. He left home and entered the world as an inexperienced wanderer in 1949 or 1950; at the same date, his landlord was withdrawing into seclusion from a world he'd come to know only too well.

As usual, the book is vague about the reasons for the landlord's long retreat: he suffered "a malaise" with "certain physical disabilities". Then, with its customary cursoriness — "some medicine or drug had been found" — the narrative suddenly declares that he is cured. This seems intended to link with the novel's general theme of recuperation, and the narrator's discovery, through his meticulously recorded observations of English country life, that the world around him is not one of mere decay but flux and change. The landlord's condition, though, serves more to draw attention to another curious feature of this book: the surprisingly high incidence of nervous illness in its sector of rural Wiltshire. The owner of the estate, with his "accidia", has been a clinical depressive for over a quarter of a century. His housekeeper goes down with "nerves". The "fancy woman" who turns a spurned wife into a nervous wreck has been an inmate of "a kind of county home for people with nervous disorders" and eventually returns there. Even the local painter and decorator is only kept going on medication: "before the pills he used to burst out crying in public".

Unwilt Your Nerves, the book Mr Biswas dispatched to his tense student son at Oxford, might with profit have been circulated in this community, you feel. And heading the list of those who might benefit from it is the narrator. His "own raw nerves", "raw colonial nerves" and "rawest of stranger's nerves" come in for abundant commentary, with the root of the problem wearily diagnosed:

These nerves had been given me as a child in Trinidad partly by our family circumstances: the half-rusted or broken-down houses we lived in, our many moves, our general uncertainty. Possibly, too, this mode of feeling went deeper, and was an ancestral inheritance, something that came with the history that had made me: not only India, with its ideas of a world outside men's control, but also the colonial plantations or estates of Trinidad, to which my impoverished Indian ancestors had been transported in the last century.

As often in *The Enigma of Arrival*, there's the sense of a rather lugubrious drawing-out of something already implicit in Naipaul's world-view. Ever since *Miguel Street*, depression has seeped through his fiction. His non-fiction, like *Among the Believers*, channels special sympathy towards people suffering from the strain of frenetic or crazed social change. Neurosis and nemesis merge in a novel such as *Guerrillas* where there's a deadly interaction between Jimmy, the disoriented West Indian, and Jane, the disturbed European.

This aspect of Naipaul gets rather by-passed in *Journey Through Darkness*, Peggy Nightingale's otherwise very sure-footed, brisk and

illuminating tour of his literary territory. Making relatively little of the impact of his father on his work, and tending to overlook the underlying personal stresses and distresses, she concentrates — with shrewdness and skill — on Naipaul as a chronicler of the public world, an acute inspector and stylish depicor of far-flung societies in upheaval or downfall.

What this constantly brings home is the nightmarish nature of Naipaul's global view. Large tracts of the northern and southern hemispheres are, in his eyes, rotting and discarded by-products of colonialism. Caribbean islands once amalgamated into a meaningful — if exploitative — larger political structure now disintegrate in a meaningless independence in which "they will forever consume; they will never create". The situation in South American nations like Argentina ("an artificial fragmented colonial society, made deficient and bogus by its myths") or Uruguay ("profoundly a colonial people, educated but intellectually null, consumers, parasitic on the culture and technology of others") is equally dire. India is merely "the fragmentation of a country without even the idea of a graded but linked society". Much of Africa is another post-colonial disaster area. Touring Zaire, with its "non-sense name", Naipaul observes its natives reeling round in "red-eyed vacancy". As Peggy Nightingale points out, the title of his African novel, *In a Free State*, doesn't just refer to political independence but to "the scientific state of freedom, unbound particles moving at random".

The main cohesive force Naipaul detects in his journeyings is a repellent one: religion of the most regressive and superstitious kind. Hinduism, ancestor worship, tribal magic, spiritualist cults and fevered South American semi-Christian sects receive sharp-eyed, agnostic attention. In his history of the settlement of Trinidad, *The Loss of El Dorado*, Naipaul remarked how the conquistador who colonized the island was "screened from the world by the completeness of his faith". *Among the Believers*, Naipaul's wide-arching investigation of Islamic fundamentalism, shows the mullahs and ayatollahs alarmingly spreading this phenomenon across the Middle and Far East. "My thoughts", the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* declares, "were of a whole new generation of young people in remote countries, made restless and uncertain in the late twentieth century not by travel but by the undoing of their old certainties, and looking for false consolation in the mind-quelling practices of a simple revealed religion."

Violence and vagrancy have more and more dominated the scenes Naipaul depicts — which perhaps explains why in this new book he lapses into staidness and stillness. Fires and riots flare across his post-colonial landscapes. Mobility is seen as menace. Travel, even for Naipaul on his reporting assignments, invites discomfort and danger. In his fiction, West

Indians who go to England meet disaster; an English visitor to the West Indies is murdered. An elegantly written account, in one of his journals, of barbarism witnessed at Luxor — a water whipping Egyptian beggar children for the benefit of the cameras of Italian tourists — excoriatingly conveys Naipaul's feelings about the ugly results of mass-travel. In *A Bend in the River*, where drifting clumps of water hyacinth are clogging the waterways, even vegetation is sinisterly on the move.

Rootlessness has always been Naipaul's chief subject, as he repeatedly makes clear in *The Enigma of Arrival*, a book about at last putting down roots in an unlikely place: arriving in Wiltshire feeling "unanchored", he burrows therapeutically into the life there and, at the same time, delves down to the roots of his creativity. His global journeys, he now comes to feel, have been like analogues of the "writer's journey" undertaken in his books to discover the contours of his own psyche.

The notion of a journey being simultaneously real and metaphorical recalls *Heart of Darkness*. And that book very evidently contributed to Naipaul's sombre, distinguished Congo novel, *A Bend in the River*. True to his belief that colonialism are all "mimic men", emulating European models, several of Naipaul's books, in fact, scent ingenious indigenous re-workings of Western novels. In *The Overcrowded Barracoon*, he says he mentally "set in Trinidad, accepting, rejecting, adapting, and peopling in my own way" books by Dickens, Wells or Conrad he read or had read to him as a boy. *A House for Mr Biswas* — placed in a hybrid society where schoolchildren peruse the *King George V Hindi Reader* — demonstrates the result of such cross-fertilization. Dyspeptic, irascible, chirpy, stuck in a profitless shop and trapped in a marriage he'd like to escape, Mr Biswas is a Trinidadian Mr Polly. Both frequently denounce the life they've sunk into as "a hole": both escape from the prison of a bankrupt shop by arson (afterwards often a favoured procedure in Naipaul's world).

The Enigma of Arrival mocks this imitative urge in the young author: dishevelled, naive, bewildered — on his first foray out of Trinidad — he struggles to pen an account of his adventures that will sound as "elegant, knowing, unsurprised" as Somerset Maugham or Aldous Huxley. It took travel, time, "and how much writing!", we're told, for him to effect a synthesis of man and writer.

The emphasis this book places on journeying as a means of finding out about yourself points to a paradox that has finally, perhaps, limited Naipaul's achievement. Despite the formidable literary powers that have accompanied his impressive peregrinations. His range, historical and geographical, is enormous. His eye has travelled perceptively over a vast variety of scenes, and his writing has captured them in graphic vignettes (even *The Enigma of Arrival* with its predominantly English setting offers some exotic glimpses: the "woven, carpet-like texture" of Trinidad's sugar-cane fields seen from the air, "the jagged, mud-coloured volcano craters . . . like giant ant-hills" of Guatemala). But, beneath the surface diversity he can so brilliantly depict, Naipaul keeps uncovering the same pattern. Society after society turns out to be a post-colonial catastrophe. Everything is pulled back within the same framework of thought. Even Islam, it transpires, combines imperialist ambitions with the post-colonial situation of being "parasitic" on the technology of the West. Warming intimacy is in short supply in these books, but chilling parallels are plentiful. As versions of his Trinidadian background are discerned everywhere, travel seems not so much to broaden Naipaul's mind as to deepen his presuppositions. "Every exploration . . . added to my knowledge", the author of *The Enigma of Arrival* asserts, but then makes it clear that this is primarily knowledge of himself. Scouring the world for experience — in order to exorcize that "fear of extinction" that so memorably haunted his father too — Naipaul finds the features of his own predicament reflected everywhere he looks.

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Preface by H. Geoffrey Brennan and
Robert D. Tollison

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The Last Day of Marriage

You told my mother your old husband died
In the small house in the dark glen, Glendhu;
That no one there could lay him out but you;
And your one place to sleep was by his side,
As if the double bed were still your bed.

And now your son's that age, I think my mother
(Foreseeing widowhood) fears such another
Dissolving night beside the newly dead.

The hours of little sleep at either end
Of marriage are too secret to be told;
The grandson and the son must not pretend
To understand the silence of the old.
I try to reach across those thirty years
With comfort: the dumb comfort of a kiss
Suddenly given can relieve those fears —

But how I wish that we could speak of this.

ALISTAIR ELLIOT

Treasure islands

Antony Alpers

NICHOLAS RANKIN
Dead Man's Chest: Travels after Robert Louis Stevenson
 366pp. Faber. £14.95.
 0571 13808 X
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
Island Landfalls: Reflections from the South Seas
 Edited by Jenni Calder
 231pp. Edinburgh: Canongate. Paperback, £3.95.
 086241 1440
In the South Seas: The Marquesas, Paumotu and Gilbert Islands
 343pp. KPI. Paperback, £6.95.
 0710301405
In the South Seas
 347pp. Hogarth. Paperback, £3.95.
 0701207663
Island Nights' Entertainments
 150pp. Hogarth. Paperback, £3.95.
 0701207671

Anyone who supposes that Robert Louis Stevenson was a literary entertainer mainly good for escapist romances, *Treasure Island*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and children's verse, has yet to learn what the Pacific turned him into in his last six years (1888-94). Four different publishers, with no centenary to mark or other external pretext, have brought out five books close together which might correct this: a curate's-egg biography called *Dead Man's Chest* by Nicholas Rankin—a muddening book of which the good parts are often excellent; *Island Landfalls*, a splendid selection made by Jenni Calder from Stevenson's letters and travel pieces along with three short South Sea fictions; and, in the comforting old typographic, offset reprints of two intact titles of his own: *In the South Seas* (ostensibly a travel book), and *Island Nights' Entertainments* (his own name in 1893 for three short fictions). In spite of some duplication all the reissues are

welcome, especially for their modern introductions, which collectively make a case for fresh appraisal.

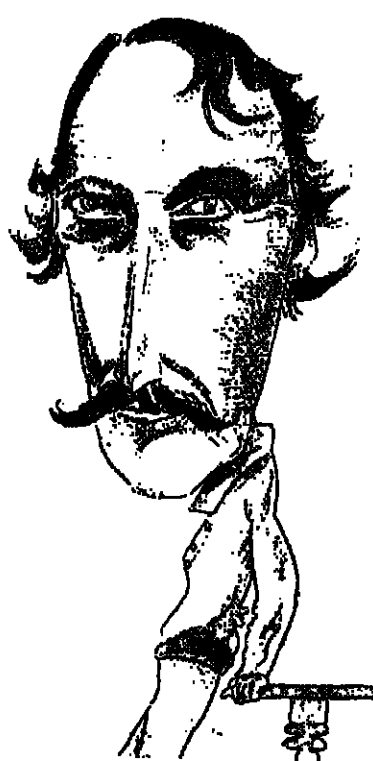
What led Stevenson to the Pacific in 1888 was roughly as follows: having met the American Mrs Fanny Osbourne and her two children in France some twelve years earlier, the rake-thin bohemian in a velvet jacket pursued her to California and married her there while still hard up (and ten years younger than her forty years). More truly she had married him, tuberculosis and all, and in 1888, now that dollars were flowing in, it was she on her own who found the schooner-yacht *Casco* available for charter in San Francisco. "Blessed girl," he wired her from New Jersey, "take the yacht and expect us in ten days"—for his own final journey, as he supposed. With her son Lloyd (now twenty), Louis's lately widowed mother from Edinburgh and their Swiss-French maid from Hyères, they sailed for the Marquesas—Captain Otis having privily stowed what was needed for a burial at sea. But the ocean and the "hot and healthy islands" soon made Stevenson feel miraculously well; his hemorrhages stopped, and by the time they had reached Samoa (by way of the Tuamotu, Tahiti, Hawaii and the Gilberts, and with an even larger party) R. L. S. had undergone a sort of transplant. No new lungs, but he had a whole new outlook, and was less henceforward a writer of romance. The unromantic islands and their politics had transformed him. Keen insight into the Polynesians themselves, into the missionaries (to his surprise), and into the riff-raff "on the beach" had brought to light the realist writer of one superb novella (*The Beach of Falesa*) and the informal anthropologist of *In the South Seas*, which is no mere travel book at all. Hindsight can now see how the period romances had prepared him; but in the Pacific it was the present day he wished to write about. Before he died in 1894—of a stroke rather than TB—Stevenson had visited more than forty treasure islands that were real (people lived on them), and he soon dismayed his London literary friends by espousing the native politics of colonial Samoa.

The protagonists of Nicholas Rankin's awkward biographical *melange*, correctly subtitled *Travels after Robert Louis Stevenson*, are "him" and "me". Rankin is sometimes excellent on him, and above all on her: Fanny's strengths and practical qualities are evident and the marriage is nobly defended. But of the autobiography, and the book's twin-screen technique, one can only say "Oh dear"—as an elderly museum curator did in California when Rankin told her he was a journalist.

Dead Man's Chest is not another *Quest for Corvo*, since Stevenson was not a mysterious character in that way. At first glance it appears

to contain twelve orderly chapters named for their various locations—Scotland, France, Bournemouth, Saranac Lake, etc.—but it proves in fact to be an asterisk-divided sequence of some hundreds of vignettes which dance back and forth between "him" and "me", the quest being described with monstrous irrelevance and awful detail.

There are some segments of good biography, perhaps a page or two in length, with evidence of research, fresh facts here and



there, and care with dates. But always followed, unfortunately, by the "Travels", with their chance encounters: the Greyhound bus, Wyoming religious tracts, the lonely motel room and the backpack with (one must ruefully surmise) a cassette recorder always to hand in order to preserve the trivialities before they fade: conversation of a Geordie Foreign Legion deserter in Provence; life-story of woolly Bohunk in an Omaha Burger King; television commercials watched in Monterey; funny sights in Apia and "Pango"; a dirty lyric for "Colonel Bogey". Twentieth-century events are dragged in backwards by no hair of relevance: death and grave of Wilfred Owen; Pearl Harbor raid in detail; Pacific nuclear tests, full list. Of narrative momentum (and this is a book about Stevenson!) there is consequently none. In the end it is the exasperated reader, not the author, who must try to integrate what never will cohere. Yet the last years at Vailima are

well portrayed, especially the women.

When Stevenson began writing *In the South Seas* in 1890 he had already been there two full years and had seen nearly every group except Tonga, Fiji, and the Southern Cooks, always perceiving those sharp divergences that others missed, and a great deal more besides. That is why the book is worth ten of Melville's *Typee*, which was based on only four weeks on Nukuhiva—albeit forty-seven years before and hence of value to ethnologists. On the Marquesas, R. L. S. is superb, as he is on the Tuamotu atolls ("the Paumotu" to him); likewise, later, on the Gilberts, and that extraordinary wild-man, "king" Tembinoka, who knew the meaning of "I got power"—but cried when Stevenson departed.

Having found himself in "a no man's land of the ages, a stir-about of epochs and races, barbarisms and civilisations, virtues and crimes", Stevenson was moved to magical prose by the beauty of the islands, to clear-eyed reporting and perceptive analysis by the destructive changes occurring before his eyes. He had an impulse to anthropology; he could spot a reliable informant, whether trader, Catholic missionary, or articulate native, and he made good use of several—whose names he always gives. Indeed to Fanny's dismay he had in mind a work on an epic scale, perhaps three times as long as this one, having seen what rich material awaited his new-found vision. The islands had found that he thought in stories, just as they did, and he spoke of including some legends. Had he done some actual collecting (especially in Samoa), we might have had from his the finest of all renderings into English of Polynesian oral literature.

That the book he did achieve fared poorly on its first appearance is understandable: fans disappointed, jingo attitudes to "natives" not endorsed. It is time to rediscover it, and these two reissues are particularly welcome: the handsome one in KPI's series of Pacific Basin Books excellently introduced by Kaori O'Connor; and another, costing less, provided with a map and a well-informed introduction by Jeremy Treglown, which explains the political context.

Island Nights' Entertainments, in the Hogarth reprint, contains "The Bottle Imp" and "The Isle of Voices", two pleasing magic tales. But of the bowerlized *Beach of Falesa* it offers only what R.L.S. called the "gashed and gaping ruins". Pre-Conrad, and thus pre-*Heart of Darkness*, that story is a little masterpiece of modern fiction ("Nearer what I mean than anything I have ever done"). It should be read now only in the text as restored and rescued from absurd Victorian editing by Professor Barry Menikoff—and that is the text used in Jenni Calder's *Island Landfall*, an introductory book appropriate for anyone's Pacific Studies.

recommended career.

Worlds Apart has a cohesion and quality which are rare in collections of occasional journalism. Young describes his admiration for one of his *Observer* colleagues who wrote "with such deft, resonant and unexpected imagery that you felt you were standing at his elbow". The same might be said of his own pieces, be they reports of a bloody battle in Vietnam, of a chat with Fidel Castro or Graham Greene, or of a meander round St Helena looking for Napoleonic memorabilia. But he does more than report the facts from his varied theatres of war and strife: he reveals the human anguish behind the facts in passages which stick in the mind and which affect the reader's whole approach to the subject. This is not confined to the long section of the book dealing with Vietnam; it penetrates the whole and is perhaps nowhere better exemplified than in the accounts of life among the ultra-rich in Rome—living in dread of the kidnapping of themselves or their families. One is not surprised to find that Young is a life-long friend of Wilfrid Thesiger—the subject, incidentally, of one of his best pieces—or that he writes an elegant essay on the centenary of John Buchan's birth. For Gavin Young as surely as for Richard Harrington "There is no substitute for getting out and catching the world on the wing. Never mind about discomfort; it shifts the adrenalin about." If there are really still diplomats and

business men around—as Young believes—who taunt foreign correspondents that their pieces "are all written in hotel bars", then this book will do more than most to disabuse them.

After such a substantial book, Cecily Mackworth's *Ends of the World* seems a little thin. We are told that she travelled as an adventurer, biographer and journalist but that "unused to meeting famous people, I was intimidated, sure that I should be tongue-tied and might quite possibly spill my tea". She certainly seems to make up for lost time here: the names of the literary lions alone—Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Henry Miller, Cyril Connolly, Lawrence Durrell—fairly fall over each other. Many names are attended by curt footnotes to inform those less used to meeting them that, for instance, Stevie Smith was a poet. The book has a breathless quality which in part stems from an almost permanent use of the present tense, and in part from a resolute determination by the author not to complicate her recollections by research.

The process takes her to some interesting places at some interesting times: France during the German invasion, London in the Blitz, Palestine during partition; but on the voyage the reader is likely to drown among a passenger list of famous names in a turbulent stream of consciousness. However, one is grateful that Mackworth also gets out and catches the world on the wing.

According to plan

Richard Altick

HARRY STONE (Editor)
Dickens' Working Notes for his Novels
 393pp. University of Chicago Press. £47.95.
 0226 14590 5

The myth of Charles Dickens as an inadvertent genius totally unconscious of his rich artistry has been effectively undermined by forty years' worth of scholarship and criticism, and Harry Stone's masterly collection of Dickens's working notes should go far towards completing the process. It provides the most powerful single proof we have that after the initial triumph of *Pickwick Papers*, Dickens was an increasingly "serious" and self-aware artist. These hastily jotted-down plans for the monthly or weekly numbers in which most of his novels were originally published offer as much insight into the working of the creative imagination as do, in their different ways, the heavily corrected manuscripts of Keats's "Eve of St Agnes" and "Ode to a Nightingale" or the proof-sheets on which Balzac, to the almost suicidal despair of his printers, rewrote and yet again rewrote his novels.

These "mems", as Dickens called them, are bound into the manuscripts of the novels to which they respectively relate. Their value to Dickens studies has been manifest ever since Sylvère Monod in his *Dickens Romancier* (1953) and John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson in their *Dickens at Work* (1957) used excerpts, and those for *Our Mutual Friend* and *Little Dorrit* were published in their entirety in American learned journals. But these sporadic appearances were almost always in the form of typographical approximations. Some recent editions of individual novels, in a praiseworthy nod in the direction of scholarship, have also included such transcriptions, but as Professor Stone says, they are disfigured by hundreds of errors and all suffer from "an inability to deal satisfactorily with the problems of format and with the idiosyncrasies of Dickens's annotation".

In this massive and beautifully produced volume the memoranda have for the first time been brought together, with actual-size photographic facsimiles of the original sheets facing, across each page opening, their typographical equivalents. Honours for the success of this daunting (and, perhaps for that reason, long overdue) enterprise must be shared equally, by Stone for his deciphering of the disorderly and often fiendishly illegible originals, and by the University of Chicago Press's printers for their skill in reproducing, as faithfully as the best modern technology allows, the slanted lines, deletions, interlineations, and several grades of emphasis produced by Dickens's pen.

One of the main obstacles to accepting the notion of Dickens's conscious craftsmanship has been the question of how he found time to think about what he proposed to write, let alone actually write it. As each new volume of the ongoing Pilgrim edition of his letters amply demonstrates, he lived at a frenetic pace. At one not untypical period, he was writing *Bleak House* while simultaneously editing his weekly paper, *Household Words*, writing *A Child's History of England*, managing his amateur theatrical troupe, and acting as Angela Burdett-Coutts's almoner in connection with her rehabilitation home for prostitutes. The pressure of such "intensities" (Stone's word) was unbearable to the point of imminent collapse. As a deadline came closer and closer, Dickens had little choice but to hurl himself at his unavoidable task. "In a frenzied state of interest in *Bleak House*", he wrote in a letter in April 1853, "I had got up at 5, and gone furiously to work, so that about noon I was comparatively insensible." But he always tried to protect his writing time, and as his days and nights grew more crowded with extraneous activities he deliberately set aside ten days or a fortnight to do nothing but write the next number of the current novel.

It was not accidental that *Dombey and Son*, the first of his novels to be carefully structured, was also the first for which, so far as we know, he prepared himself by writing a set of detailed preliminary notes. From this time onward, he followed a regular practice. He folded a seven-by-nine-inch sheet in half and wrote on it his notes for, usually, the contents of a single num-

ber, amounting to three or four chapters. In an elementary affirmation of the truth that art is fundamentally a matter of choices, the left half was devoted to queries, principally having to do with placing a given character and the strand of plot he or she represented in a certain chapter. In effect, these notes were checklists, constituting Dickens's dialogue with himself as he responded to his own questions, presumably some days later after having mulled them over. The answer might be a decisive "Yes" or "No", "Carry on", or "Not yet", but sometimes the decision was not made until writing was under way.

It was on the left-hand half of the sheet that Dickens also played around with possible names for his characters. Some that he eventually chose may always have struck us as excessively contrived and not likely to be found in any London directory, but the whimsicality of some that he rejected was positively painful. Had he not fortunately thought better of it, characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit* might have been named Sweetletoe or Fleeter/Sweezer, and Miss Mowcher in *David Copperfield* might have appeared as Miss Croddeldej, Miss Croodley or Miss Croodlejum.

The other half of the sheet Dickens allotted to notes, increasingly detailed and chaotic as novel followed novel, on what events should go into each chapter and how they should be treated. These are the ones that show his excited inventiveness most fully at work, or at least being triggered. Ordinarily we cannot tell whether a note—a word or two, or a single sentence at most—is the cue for an idea he had already developed mentally in some detail, or whether it was simply a spark that would set off a creative explosion once Dickens was composing. The single word "scene" or "picture" proves, when we turn to the completed novel, to have been the cue for an extended description or dramatic scene. In the *David Copperfield* notes Dickens is a bit more specific than usual: "Walter—Glass of ale—chops—pudding—himself" suggests that he had already worked out the half-comic, half-pathetic scene at the Yarmouth inn when the waiter cons little David out of his dinner.

For some reason, Dickens never used shorthand in these notes, although as a young man reporting parliamentary debates he was proud of his facility in that arcane script. But many of them have the effect of shorthand. Some can be translated only when they are traced into a novel's text. The wonderfully cryptic "Cuypp/cowson an ottoman" in the *Little Dorrit* notes—which calls to mind the enigmatic reading notes kept by Coleridge and later transmuted into poetry—turns out to be the germ of a sentence in the description of Merdle's dinner-party: "This eminent gentleman and Mr Merdle, seated diverse ways and with ruminating aspects on a yellow ottoman in the light of the fire, holding no verbal communication with each other, bore a strong general resemblance to the two cows in the Cuypp picture over against them."

Single adjectives might represent extended motifs, as in the *Dombey and Son* memoranda. "Icy christening" foreshadows Dickens's insistence on icy coldness as the presiding effect of the church scene at Paul's christening, and "Old child" similarly cues his portrayal of Paul as an unnaturally aged little boy. Immediately after "old child" Dickens wrote, "Papa what's money?"—a reminder to include the famous poser with which the innocent Paul confronted his father.

Although it is impossible to tell when the ideas he jotted down first occurred to him, Dickens obviously cherished certain phrases, fancies, images and fragments of speech far in advance of incorporating them into his manuscript: "Clock in the hall says 'how is my little friend?'" (at Dr Blimber's, in *Dombey*); "Mr Dombey musing at table—Dead sea of mahogany, with plates and dishes riding at anchor"; "Taking a Guitar case through the Forest of Difficulty" (the insufferable, fluff-brained Dora in *David Copperfield*); "Can we fly my friends? We cannot. And why can we not fly my friends? etc. etc. A man with a good deal of train oil in his composition" (Chaddband in *Bleak House*); "Discipline must be maintained" (the ex-soldier Bagnel in the same novel); "House like a bottle of smell. When the footman opens the door, he seems to take the stopper out" (*Little Dorrit*: Tibb's Barriale's

house in Mews Street, Grosvenor Square); "Stations shutting their green eyes and opening their red ones, as they let the Boofer Lady go by" (*Our Mutual Friend*).

The black deletions whose under-writing Professor Stone has heroically recovered show that Dickens often had second thoughts. But it is remarkable how few of his hundreds of fragmentary ideas, large and small, he rejected once he had given them his preliminary approval. If they survived in the notes, they went into the book. One of the very few notions that did prove dispensable was that of providing Sissy Jupe, in *Hard Times*, with a lover. This, however, was a comparatively edible fruit in Dickens's cornucopia of ideas and it might well have worked out. On the other hand, "Present little Dora's death, through Jip's [her dog's] Death. David sees him lie down on the rug, and die—Agnes comes down—all over" was a bad idea when Dickens wrote it down in the *Copperfield* notes, and it remained a bad idea when it appeared in the published novel. Dickens's admirers could not claim that he never blotted a line—his manuscripts are proof to the contrary. But his confidence in his powers and judgment was never higher than when, working under pressure and at white heat, he transformed his memoranda into a work of fictional art.

Post-Jamesian critics never gave Dickens high marks for attention to form. It was easy enough to suppose that the inbuilt necessities of serial publication resulted in a formless product, the loose baggy monster of Henry James's all too celebrated phrase. The notes demonstrate how steadily Dickens kept his eye on the finished book which was to be viewed as an artistic whole. It is true that he had to think first of what was to go into the restricted space of a single number, but even in the midst of these immediate considerations we find him constantly taking the longer view. He may have been an inspired improviser, but he was also a careful planner. From the beginning, he mapped strategy: "Great point of the NP", he reminded himself apropos of the sixth number of *Dombey*, after Paul had died in the fifth, "to throw the interest of Paul, at once on Florence." Scattered throughout the notes are such directions to himself as "pave the way", "lay the ground", "back to the opening chapter of the book, strongly" (*Our Mutual Friend*).

The mems for *Little Dorrit* particularly reveal a strong interest in structural experimentation. "People to meet and part as travellers do," he wrote as he prepared to begin Chapter One, "and the future connexion with them in the story, not be shewn to the reader but to be worked out as in life. Try this uncertainty and this non-putting of them together, as a new means of interest. Indicate and carry through this intention." (He did.) The foreshadowing every reader notes turns out to have been perfectly intentional. Chapter Fifteen: "Begin [with a view to Rigaud catastrophe] the mysterious sounds in the old house." Midway through: "Prepare for the time to come—in that room, long afterwards. Pancks, immensely excited—strong preparation for the end of the book." As the end comes within sight: "Prepare, finally, for the last scene at the old house", and "Throw the interest back to the first chapter. Run the two ends of the book together."

All this care was exercised with his readers constantly in mind, and Dickens several times is seen weighing the effect a certain touch would have on them. "Not to make too much of the scene with the father, or it may be too painful," he noted as he began Chapter Seventeen of *Dombey*. "Relieve by making Wegg as comic as possible", he told himself as he proceeded with *Our Mutual Friend*, and, recognizing the danger of Bella Wilfer's becoming an unsympathetic character, "Says she is mercenary and why but indicate better qualities. Interest the reader in her." As a frustrated man of the theatre, he liked to envision the "strong scenes" he was about to devise, and he relished the punch or curtain lines he had in readiness. Esther in *Bleak House*: "For I cannot see you Charley—I am blind"; Adin in the same novel: "Not going home my dear, any more. Richard is my dear husband!"

Dickens also took pains to regulate the pace of the action, suiting it to both the immediate context and the overall design of the novel. "Be Patient with Carker", he wrote, "Get him

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on very slowly, without incident"; but several numbers of *Dombey* farther on, "Pursuit-entending still carried through, *quick and fierce*." As the years and novels went by, it was restraint he increasingly aimed for; his inherent exuberance could take care of itself. His notes reveal his awareness of how easily, in one of his taxing but totally absorbing fits of creativity, things could get out of hand. Phrases like "yes, but almost imperceptibly", "very delicate", "lead, very carefully, on", "very quiet conclusion", and "with great care" (written in two inked boxes, for special attention, on a single sheet of notes for *Our Mutual Friend*) appear more frequently.

These evidences of Dickens's heightened valuation of artistic tact and his impulse towards self-criticism are most numerous in the notes for two of the later novels, *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*. It is not mere coincidence that these, especially the latter, were two novels which Dickens found especially difficult to write. The accents of the stern taskmaster, alternately cajoling and admonishing the delinquent pupil, are heard more clearly, along with the pupil's resolution, "Wind up the Book I as skilfully and completely as I can", Dickens commanded himself as he prepared to write the fifth number of *Our Mutual Friend*. The notes for these books exceed in sheer quantity and detail the earlier ones, as if Dickens needed them to assist a flagging memory and help concentrate his attention at a time of numerous distractions. Granted that the several plots of *Our Mutual Friend* are the most convoluted in the entire Dickens canon, it was

only for this book that he distrusted his memory and felt obliged to devote a whole page of notes to a summary "Position of affairs at the end of the Second Book". A practice he had begun largely as a convenient *aide-memoire* in the years when his artistic ambition was stirring had become a practical necessity to the harried, often ailing Dickens of the late novels.

Stone makes no excessive claims for the critical importance of this newly assembled (and, in his lengthy introduction, expertly interpreted) material. He simply says that they add a fresh dimension to Dickens studies, especially by way of validating some critical assumptions hitherto based on the published texts alone and casting doubt upon, if not actually destroying, others. In addition, scholars now possess, for the first time, the precise photographically reproduced form of the notes themselves, even indicating the very intensity (but not, except in the frontispiece, the colour) of the ink, the breadth and form of the underlinings and excisions. The momentum of Professor Stone's well-grounded enthusiasm, however, carries him an inch past the border of ready assent. "It is impossible", he declares, "to know when or how a particular stray squiggle, an eager boldness of emphasis, or a faint uncertain interlineation - to say nothing of more substantive matters - will be used by present or future students to solve old problems or resolve new perplexities." The age of the squiggle factor in literary studies is upon us. Is it a development we are quite prepared to handle?

The critic as prophet

Robert Hewison

HAROLD BLOOM (Editor)
The Literary Criticism of John Ruskin
398pp. New York: Da Capo. Paperback,
\$12.95.
0306802945

This selection of passages, varying in length from a page to almost a complete chapter, from the thirty-nine volumes of the Library Edition of Ruskin's works, was first published in 1965, just as the revival in Ruskin studies was getting under way. It is a drawback of a photographic reproduction that Harold Bloom appears still to be recommending a book published in 1902 as the best short study of Ruskin; more importantly, there have been no revisions to the introduction that might have taken advantage of more recent biographical and critical studies. Thus the first volume of Tim Hilton's biography, *John Ruskin: The early years* (1985), is a corrective to Bloom's underestimation of the formative influence of Ruskin's father - the source of his passion for Scott and Byron - while a number of studies, notably G. P. Landow's *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (1971), have explored the influence of Evangelical exegesis on Ruskin's criticism, which Bloom hardly touches on.

Bloom's introduction, and the chronological selection that follows, rightly present Ruskin's sensibility in terms of a "radical revision of Romanticism", profoundly influenced by the theories of Coleridge and the practice of Wordsworth, but developing into a criticism both of the Romantics' dependence for inspiration on a sense of loss of delight in nature, and of the loss of direct apprehension which that first, evanescent experience involved. Living in the middle, rather than at the beginning, of the nineteenth century, Ruskin witnessed a far more thorough and material loss of natural delight than the first-generation Romantics; as his description of Croxted Lane, extracted here from *Fiction, Fair and Foul* (1890), demonstrates.

Bloom uses Ruskin's "post-Wordsworthian" sense of reality to explain his development into "a tragic critic (if to add a phrase may be allowed)". Beneath the storm-cloud of the nineteenth century Ruskin seeks to recover the moral significance of nature and art by adopting the prophetic mode of myth-interpretation and myth-maker. Thus by the last volume of *Modern Painters* in 1860 he has developed into

what Bloom sees as a proto-Northrop Frye, whose theories of the archetype were in the ascendant when this selection was first published. Bloom implies that he has been a little daring by including so much material from after 1860 - including the whole of the lecture *The Queen of the Air* - but it is fair to say that it is Ruskin's later writings, especially *Fors Clavigera*, under-represented here, which are now receiving most attention.

Ruskin divides the literary figures whom he discusses into two somewhat shifting categories: those like Homer, Dante, Chaucer and Shakespeare, who combined a visionary apprehension of the world with a capacity to see it plain, and those like Wordsworth and Byron, who were too deeply affected by what they saw. His later writings also include some lively commentary on contemporary French and English novelists. But, as Ruskin remarks, "I use the words painter and poet quite indifferently", and Ruskin's true subject was the operation of the imagination in all its forms. It was this that led him to devise the term "pathetic fallacy", his principal technical contribution to literary criticism, in order to distinguish the noble but distorted perception of a Romantic like Wordsworth from the vision of Dante or Shakespeare.

The development of Ruskin's theory of the imagination, which can be traced through the extracts Bloom provides, led in the end to a pathetic fallacy of Ruskin's own devising: the system of material, yet abstract, symbols of light and life, death and darkness which Ruskin deployed, with the assistance of Max Müller's philological theories, in *The Queen of the Air*. Searching through his "whole picture galleries of dreams", Ruskin believed that the purpose of literature, as he wrote in *Sesame and Lilies*, was the inculcation of a state of "kingship", which with its complementary "queenship" symbolized the true moral authority which his social criticism was intended to assert.

The title of Harold Bloom's useful selection begs the question of whether Ruskin can be treated as a literary critic at all. In a modern sense he was not, for regardless of the author he is discussing, the subject is always subordinate to Ruskin's critical purpose. This places Ruskin's writings in a superior position to most literary criticism, for we see more than analysis and exegesis at work. Rather, they precede an imaginative transformation that creates a new literary genre of moral and emotional resonance. Thus we can agree with Bloom's description of Ruskin as "a prose poet of extraordinary power who took the whole concern of mind as his subject".

A book of silences

Chris Baldick

PAULA R. FELDMAN AND
DIANA SCOTT-KILVERT (Editors)
The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844
Volume One: 1814-July 1822
473pp. £55.00 0198125712
Volume Two: 1822-1844
318pp. £45.00 0198126743
Oxford: Clarendon Press.

"This is the journal book of misfortunes", Mary Shelley wrote in the second of her private notebooks in September 1818, after the death of her baby daughter Clara. She had already lost a premature child in 1815, and her marriage to Percy Bysshe Shelley in the following year had taken place in the shadow of two suicides: those of her half-sister Fanny Imlay and of Shelley's first wife, Harriet. Well might this mournful diarist look back on her first four fugitive and debt-ridden years with Shelley as a catalogue of misfortunes; but like the grim family curse which unwinds itself through the narrative of *Frankenstein*, the tribulations of Mary Shelley still had their full course to run. The death of her son William in 1819 was the prelude to the greater disasters of 1822: her near-fatal miscarriage, the death of her niece Allegra (her stepsister Claire Clairmont's child by Byron), and the drowning of her husband along with Edward Williams. After these calamities she re-titled her fourth notebook "The Journal of Sorrow", pouring into it a grief which was rarely to be relieved. Recording yet another death - Byron in 1824 - she asks:

Why am I doomed to live on seeing all expire before me? God grant I may die young. A new race is springing about me - At the age of twenty six I am in the condition of an aged person - all my old friends are gone - I have no wish to form new . . .

Ten years later she could still describe herself as "more friendless more alone than human being ever was", and feel that she had been "peculiarly the mark of disaster & pain".

In the long years of her widowhood, Mary Shelley resorted to her journal infrequently but in prolonged and painful sessions of self-examination. As she explained to Jane Williams, she had been "again transformed into the silent Mary . . . I make up for my silence in speech by my garulity [sic] on paper." In contrast, the journals of her life with Shelley from their elopement in 1814 until his death are far from garrulous. Although the entries are kept up almost daily except in times of illness, they are minimal jottings, the sparse fruits of their author's circumspection and notorious reserve. A typical entry records the Shelleys' reading for the day, the weather and any visitors, while on more eventful days an illness or a trip to the opera will be noted. Events which we might expect to call forth some response from the diarist - Fanny's suicide, Shelley's infatuation with Emilia Viviani, the blackmail attempt by the servant Paolo - are passed over in virtual silence, while much of the tangled business of Claire's relations with Byron is locked away under a secret code of lunar and solar symbols.

In these journals it is the silences that speak; just how eloquent they are can at last be recognized in this lavishly well-documented edition, the footnotes to which add up to a substantial biography. With exemplary care Paula Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert guide the reader through the labyrinth of the Shelleys' (and Godwin's) legal and financial difficulties, correct the diarist's inaccuracies of chronology, and check her entries against other sources within and beyond her social circle. While Mary Shelley was keeping her secrets hidden from the prying eyes of Claire and the servants, other secrets were, in their turn, being kept from her. In her crises of grief and physical illness, her husband intercepted a number of characteristically insensitive letters from Godwin, and many of the earlier negotiations with Byron over Claire's fate were conducted man-to-man at the Villa Diodati while Mary was left literally holding the baby. It is a credit to the editors that they are able to explain lucidly Shelley's reasons for keeping Mary in the dark about why Claire was being kept in the dark about Byron's movements.

Although the full story is to be found chiefly in the footnotes, we have at least a few glimpses in the early notebooks of the fitful exhilaration felt by the eloping couple in 1814, and during their subsequent trip to Switzerland in 1816. Mary Shelley's disgust at the unhygienic habits of the French, or at the "horrid and slimy" appearance of the "loathsome creepers" she encountered in Switzerland, shows a freshness of response which fades in later years. And, scribbled among the odd shopping lists, doodles and medical prescriptions, a curious little mock recipe appears in Shelley's hand, testifying to the couple's grisly sense of fun:

9 drops of human blood
7 grains of gunpowder
1/4 an oz. of putrefied brain
13 mashed grave worms.

In similar high spirits, Pecksie and the Elfin Knight (as they called one another) amused themselves in Germany: "we frightened from us one man who spoke English and whom we did not like by talking of cutting off Kings heads". But elsewhere gloom prevails when Mary Shelley records her mood: she writes at some length on her impressions of Chamoni and of the Mer de Glace, which she chose as the central setting for *Frankenstein*, as "The most desolate place in the world", and her response to the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is one of melancholy reflection.

A hopeful prospect briefly offered itself a few months before her husband's death. In February 1822, stimulated by the conversation of Trelawny, she appears to be bracing herself for some bold intellectual endeavour, writing of moments when "I awaken from my ordinary monotony and my thoughts flow", and when "I would tear the veil from this strange world & pierce with eagle eyes beyond the sun". Her aspirations are oddly reminiscent of those of her own Victor Frankenstein: "above all let me fearlessly descend into the remotest caverns of my own mind - carry the torch of self knowledge into its dimmest recesses . . .". A few months later, though, she would write her *Journal of Sorrow* on a desk containing Shelley's heart wrapped in the pages of *Adonais*. Obligated by the meanness of her father-in-law, Sir Timothy Shelley, to move out of London to economize on her son's school fees, Mary Shelley had little to record except the anguish of her return to monotony. "I am not now gowing [sic] to pour forth complaints in this book", she wrote in 1834. "What then am I about to write in it?"

Such entries hardly give us an adequate impression of this writer's mind, as she herself noted: "It has struck me what a very imperfect picture (only no one will ever see it) these querulous pages afford of me". Since she was addressing no one but herself and the spirits of the dead, self-portraiture comes but accidentally in the journals; it is in her letters that her character and opinions emerge more clearly. Only when stung by the reproaches of her former friends - Trelawny especially - does Mary Shelley embark on an extended apology in her journal. Here she denies accusations of worldliness, and puts forward her reasons for her reticence in public affairs: "If I have never written to vindicate the Rights of women, I have ever befriended women when oppressed", she wrote, and her friend Caroline Norton, the writer and advocate of more humane divorce laws, could have vouched for her in that.

These two volumes supersede F.L. Jones's 1947 edition, which was based on an incomplete version circulated by Mary Shelley's daughter-in-law. Although the new apparatus is superb, the textual differences turn out to be remarkable: some of the more anguished outbursts of grief had been suppressed, along with a few acid remarks about the second Mrs Godwin. The most important omission from this book of significant silences remains, however, one which the best editor can do nothing to remedy: the loss of the notebook for the early summer of 1816. Here, if anywhere, some further clue to the strange genesis of *Frankenstein* must, we suppose, have been left. To judge by the extant notebooks, though, even this would have been understated, perhaps thus: "Thursday, Shelley unveiled a story. Rained all afternoon."

Making an American medicine

Roy Porter

RONALD L. NUMBERS (Editor)
Medicine in the New World: New Spain, New France and New England
175pp. Knoxville: Tennessee University Press.
0870495178
PHINIZY SPALDING
The History of the Medical College of Georgia
290pp. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
\$35.

08203 09281
W. BRUCE FRYE

The Development of American Physiology:
Scientific medicine in the nineteenth century
308pp. Johns Hopkins University Press.
£26.55.

0801834597

ELIZABETH FEE
Disease and Discovery: A history of the Johns
Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health
1916-1939

286pp. Johns Hopkins University Press.

£21.30.

0801834600

ALBERT W. SNOKE
Hospitals, Health and People
232pp. Yale University Press. £27.50.
0300053888

Medicine stands with one foot in society and the other in science; and in no environment have these two sometimes contradictory footings been more clearly delineated than in the United States. One traditional current running through American medicine claimed that because of the particular circumstances of the New World and its new society, a new patriotic medicine needed to be created - one uniquely adapted to frontier conditions, one freed from the archaic monopolistic restrictions of *ancien régime* Europe.

But this social argument was no less frequently met by the counter-claim that science had to be the pole-star of medical progress; and if that meant following the ways of the university, the laboratory and the clinic as developed in Britain, France or Germany, so be it. The "scientific" argument won, but we must not be fooled into thinking that the triumph of scientific medicine was not itself an ideological product of the special pressures of American society.

The hypothesis that American medicine developed along unique lines to meet unique circumstances is obviously an offshoot of Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier" thesis. Does it hold water? On balance, the contributors to Ronald L. Numbers's stimulating collection, *Medicine in the New World*, are unimpressed. Looking at French and Spanish America as well as the Thirteen Colonies, what chiefly catches their eye is how both governments and doctors aimed to replicate the structures of Old World medicine in the New, not least the old three-tiered professional hierarchy and guild restrictions.

This is borne out by Phinazy Spalding's alert narrative of the emergence of the Medical Academy of Georgia, founded at Augusta in 1828. Set up to rectify the lack of trained physicians in the South, the Georgia Academy deftly forged links with landed and moneyed society and with the state government, securing to elite physicians a measure of privilege and profit which would have excited the envy of fashionable practitioners in Europe.

The idyll could not last. In the South in particular, the Civil War spell disruption and decline. Medical sects proliferated, and standards fell. Regeneration was needed; and the desideratum, claimed a distinguished vanguard of the profession, must be to pump in a healthy transfusion of science. Physiology had been pioneered by Claude Bernard, bacteriology by Pasteur, pathological anatomy and lab research by the Germans. America had to assimilate these new developments fast. W. Bruce Frye's analysis in *The Development of American Physiology*, biographically organized around the careers of four leading experimentalists - John Call Dalton, S. Weir Mitchell, Henry Bowditch and Newell Martin - shows that the times were ripe. By the 1880s opinion leaders, particularly in the North, had changed their tune. No longer should America be different from the world: its mission was to beat it. These advocates of research-oriented

scientific medicine won a sympathetic hearing among civic worthies and philanthropists, eager to fund the future.

No ear proved more receptive than that of John D. Rockefeller. Wishing to invest millions to put American medicine on the map, Rockefeller wholeheartedly accepted the view of his advisers, the Flexner brothers, that science held the key. The Flexner Report of 1910 - so damning about the shortcomings of colleges like the one at Augusta - launched a new era in medical education.

But Rockefeller also addressed himself to the crisis in public health. By the turn of this century, East Coast inner cities were suffering from the same health hazards as had blighted the industrial heartlands of Victorian England. But the field of public health was itself split into two camps, those giving priority to social action, and those favouring scientific. Should the keynote be socio-political reform, eliminating health threats from the environment, workplace and home, waging war on poverty, and educating the people in the art of healthy living (ideals traditionally close to the hearts of "progressives")? Or did the scientific laboratory hold the key, deploying bacteriology, epidemiology and biochemistry to discover specific pathogens, develop vaccines and launch targeted eradication programmes?

Victorian England chiefly opted for the former approach, setting up an administrative system of public health officials. Germany by contrast threw its resources into laboratory research. When urban disease reached intolerable proportions in early twentieth-century America, that choice had to be made. Why the Rockefeller Foundation chose to put its money into the latter model, funding basic research into epidemiology rather than plumping for training cohorts of urban health reformers, forms the key issue in Elizabeth Fee's perceptive history of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, America's first and best institution in the field, supported wholly by Rockefeller dollars.

In part the explanation lies in prestige. Rockefeller, the Flexner brothers and other key figures such as Wickliffe Rose hoped to raise up an American Pasteur or Koch. They were not wholly disappointed: Elmer McCollum, an early appointee, did much of his fundamental research on vitamins while at Hopkins, and major laboratory investigations helped tackle the problems of sleeping sickness, Chagas disease, malaria and hookworm.

In part, however, it was a question of politics. Neither Rockefeller nor the School's first director, William Welch, wanted a public health commitment which would concentrate on exposing industrial accidents, occupational diseases or the other health hazards of capital-

Competing for God

M. J. Heale

PATRICIA U. BONOMI
Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, society,
and politics in colonial America
291pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50.
0195041866

The late Richard Hofstadter once speculated, in conversation with Patricia U. Bonomi, that it was religion more than anything which conditioned the attitudes of colonial Americans towards politics. This insight forms the theme of her new book. The idea may seem an unremarkable one when applied to the Puritans' Bible Commonwealth or the Quakers' Holy Experiment; but Bonomi argues her case with respect to all colonies and with increasing vigour as she leaves the early settlements behind and presses on into the eighteenth century. It is that century in which she evidently feels most at home and which she is intent on defending against the calumny that it witnessed a waning of religious zeal. In her hands, the Great Awakening of about 1739 to 1745 becomes less a reaction against deism and comes more the product of a vital, intense, competitive and disputatious religious culture. Religious enthusiasm spilled over into politics at every point and framed the responses of Americans to the excitements of the revolutionary era. Risking the wrath of one's king was one



"Tablet" 1966, is reproduced from The Drawings of Roy Lichtenstein by Bernice Rose (200pp. New York: Museum of Modern Art; distributed in the UK by Thames and Hudson. £23.50. 0 870704168).

ism (Welch instantly scotched a suggestion to investigate the perils of smoking). The environments to be cleaned up were not those at home but in Africa, Latin America and the Far East, where endemic disease threatened overseas capitalist investment: it was the conquest of tropical diseases which captured the lime-light. Ironically, the relations between the School of Public Health and the Baltimore public health department remained weak and cool (though Baltimore had been chosen partly because, as a local enthusiast claimed, "we have 100,000 darkies here, with all their diseases").

thing, but risking the wrath of one's God was altogether more awesome, and, as Bonomi engagingly demonstrates, it was their religious convictions which enabled many Americans to turn their swords against their earthly monarch.

Bonomi's thoughtful and thought-provoking book is based on extensive reading in primary and secondary sources, although, understandably in a work of broad compass, less use is made of manuscripts than of published sermons and journals. While treating the colonial period as a whole, it is a synoptic and selective interpretation rather than a definitive study, and it is considerably shorter than the colonial section of Sydney Ahlstrom's *Religious History of the American People*. There is little discussion of theology in these pages, which focus rather on the sociology of colonial religion and its political implications. Thus we learn about the character of the clergy, the fierce competition between its members and their increasing professional status; about the nature of colonial parishioners, their varying reasons for attending church, and the extraordinary numbers in which they did so; about the divisive effects of the Great Awakening; in politics as well as in religion; and about the key roles played by a tradition of religious dissent, by politically conscious clergymen and by clerical associations, in the coming of the American Revolution. There are revealing probes of topics which have recently been engaging

Scholarly attention, such as the "feminization" of colonial religion, a correlation being established between the numerical ascendancy of women in certain congregations and the growing authority of full-time ministers, which diminished the role of male elders and deacons. A brief concluding chapter speculates on the colonial contribution to a lasting American religious culture, one which has helped to give the United States a distinctive national character.

Some of the issues raised by Bonomi, such as the sustained vitality of colonial religion and the contribution of the Great Awakening to the American Revolution, have been discussed often enough before, but there is freshness in the evidence she adduces and elegance in the arguments she advances. However, her central thesis that religion was the formative influence on colonial politics remains unproven. Bonomi makes no attempt to weigh religion against other influences, and a strong case could be made out for the primacy of economics. The emergence of political groupings in the revolutionary legislatures, for example, in which landed, commercial and creditor interests were arrayed against small farmer, rural and debtor interests, would seem to suggest that economic considerations were in the forefront of Americans' minds. But no one can deny the interpenetrations of religion and politics, and few scholars have illustrated them as richly as Patricia Bonomi.

A myth maintained

Denis Mack Smith dismisses a new attempt to rehabilitate Mussolini's perfidious successor

VANNA VAILATI
1943-1944, *La Storia nascosta*: Documenti
inglesi segreti che non sono mai stati pubblicati
427pp. Turin: GEC. L35,000.

In her attempt to rescue the historical reputation of Marshal Pietro Badoglio, Vanna Vailati has already written three books. A fourth has now appeared which possesses the particular interest of being based on documents in the British national archives. Badoglio was the man who on July 25, 1943, was chosen by the King of Italy to replace Mussolini, and his was the decision in the following September to sign an armistice with General Eisenhower that took Italy out of the war. His actions during these six weeks have been the subject of much controversy, but long before 1943 he had already become a controversial figure. Many experts blamed him, perhaps a little unfairly, for the military defeat at Caporetto in 1917. Another point of criticism was his joining the Fascist party and serving Mussolini in a variety of senior positions for almost twenty years. So valuable was his support for fascism that he earned a very much higher salary than any other military or civil servant. The fascists made him an ambassador and colonial governor. They gave him a succession of grand titles that he immediately coveted, those of Marshal, Marquis, Duke and Viceroy. He was also Chief of General Staff from 1925 to 1940, a period that covered the wars against Ethiopia, Spain, Albania and Greece. After 1937 he was concurrently President of the National Council for Research, and in these multiple jobs had an obvious responsibility for the unreadiness of the Italian armed forces when Mussolini entered the Second World War.

In earlier publications Vailati put up a very unconvincing argument for the defence, even trying to make out that Badoglio had been a secret anti-fascist from the beginning. She has an easier task in this book, which opens at the moment when he began to think of distancing himself from a Mussolini who was becoming increasingly dangerous and megalomaniac. In the British documents for 1938-9 there are a few brief references to Badoglio as a relatively neutral figure who might lead his name one day to a coup, and this possibility was raised again when the fascist government dismissed him for incompetence after a small Greek army defeated the Italians in November 1940. Badoglio subsequently wrote a highly inaccurate book of memoirs in which he stated his conviction that the Italian people had always been opposed to fighting alongside Hitler, and indeed he personally had often thought of resigning as Chief of General Staff, but he never did resign and clearly was ready to support Mussolini for as long as fascism was

still winning. Nor was he much of an active *frondeur* after 1940. The British Foreign Office continued throughout the war to piece together any fragmentary information about possible sources of opposition in Italy, and Vailati treats at length the many stories that arrived in London from Sweden, Portugal, Switzerland and the Vatican; but they have little to say about Badoglio, and inevitably were so hypothetical and inaccurate that they possess little historical interest.

More important and interesting are the documents she has found for the few months after September 1943, when a long series of memoranda and minutes chart the development of Allied policy towards liberated Italy. But this chapter of history has already been treated in far more scholarly and persuasive fashion by David Ellwood in his substantial book, *Italy 1943-45* (1985), which evidently Vailati has not read. Her own account is anything but scholarly. There are no footnotes. Dates are sometimes wrong, so are page references, while some important names are consistently misspelled and she obviously has a very imperfect knowledge of the English language. Moreover, her quotations, even those from the Italian, can sometimes be a mere paraphrase of the originals, so that her translations from English documents must be treated with great caution.

The general interpretation of events presented here is permeated by a sense of outraged indignation against America and Britain for not giving Badoglio more support. Far from being grateful for Allied help in liberating Italy from fascism, the author insists that they should have helped much more. In particular she blames English imperialism for a "profound hatred" of Italy. Where Badoglio is invariably called sensible and far-sighted, the British are condemned by what she calls the verdict of history for their many errors, for inadequate military preparation, muddled thinking about policy, and unwillingness to admit that Badoglio knew more than they did about military strategy. She is no doubt correct in saying that British policy during these dramatic and crowded months was too tentative, but this is put down to foolishness and ill-will, with no realization of the difficulties where every step had to be first cleared with Washington and the joint Allied command in Algiers. Ellwood makes some valid criticisms of what might have been done better, but Vailati's tirade is wide of the mark. She is glibly enough to believe that the British were determined to punish Italy by annexing Sardinia and Sicily, giving Piedmont and Genoa to France, and southern Italy to Greece.

Such a book would not be worth serious discussion were it not for the perpetuation of other myths that, being repeated from book to

book, are rapidly becoming accepted facts about Italy's withdrawal from the war. The author thus blames the Anglo-American alliance and not Badoglio for the tragic delay of six weeks between the fall of Mussolini and the armistice of September 1943, a delay which allowed the Germans to take over much of the country. She then criticizes London for the slowness of the Allied military campaign in Italy, without taking into account that the original design was for a holding operation to attract German forces into Italy and away from the main Normandy landing: the primary objective was to win not the whole peninsula but the port of Naples and the airfields near Foggia. Another of her criticisms is of the Allied reluctance to trust Badoglio which prevented him being given advance knowledge of Eisenhower's invasion plans; but she omits to note that he continued to reassure the Germans on his word of honour as a soldier that he remained a loyal ally of Hitler, and in fact repeated this assurance early in September.

On another more controversial point she dismisses without argument the evidence of those Italian generals and politicians who thought that Italy should have realistically admitted defeat at once after July 25 and denounced the German alliance. She states as a fact that the Western Allies broke formal promises to Badoglio that they would give him two weeks' notice before any invasion and would then land with at least fifteen divisions near Rome; whereas these alleged promises are pure fiction. Subsequently Badoglio claimed that he had of course known that the limited range of air cover meant that any Allied landing would have to be in southern Italy, but at the time he was so removed from reality that he begged Eisenhower to choose beaches hundreds of miles to the north, even mentioning the northern Adriatic and the gulf of Spezia. Logistics were evidently not his strong point.

These fabrications and fantasies were designed as excuses to explain why Badoglio gave no practical help when, on September 8 at Salerno, the Allies made their first landing on the mainland of Europe. Excuses were badly needed, because on September 3 he had secretly signed an armistice that promised to give Eisenhower active assistance. By September 6 he also knew that the invasion fleet was at sea, yet nothing was done to prepare for it. In fact, despite his signed undertaking on September 3, it now seems that he at no time intended to do anything except wait to see if the invaders could defeat the Germans on their own. One further excuse that he invented, and which Vailati accepts without question, was that the Allies had formally undertaken not to attack before September 12, and then deceived him by changing the date so that he had no time to prepare. But no such promise was given, nor was any mention ever made of September 12 or any other date. Clearly he wanted a plausible reason for remaining on the sidelines, even

though he could have done a great deal to help by merely erecting road-blocks and threatening German lines of communication. Worse still, he gravely imperilled the Salerno landing by begging Eisenhower to switch the one available airborne division away from Salerno for an alternative diversionary landing near Rome; and then at the last moment, when the planes were taking off, asked for the operation to be cancelled when it was too late for this vitally important unit to be switched back again to assist in one of the most perilous operations of the whole war.

Whatever may have been the truth about Caporetto, Badoglio was without doubt directly responsible for the greatest disaster in Italian military history when, on September 9, 1943, he hurriedly abandoned Rome with a hundred senior generals and staff officers, leaving no proper command structure but only verbal and ambiguous instructions for the army to take no initiative of any kind against German forces in the area; with the result that a million men either disappeared into the *maquis* or were taken as prisoners to Germany. His civilian ministers were not informed that he was leaving Rome, and Vailati says this was because they could not be found, whereas in fact they were waiting by their telephones, so his silence must have been deliberate. Even odder, evidence has now been produced to suggest that the Italian soldiers round Rome could have fought with good prospects of success, and could certainly have delayed German reinforcements being transferred southward to Salerno. Instead, the Italian army was left leaderless and formally forbidden to attack any German positions. Badoglio had said a few hours earlier that Rome could and would be defended, but evidently, whether by accident or deliberately, he omitted to make any of the contingency plans that such a defence would have required. He preferred to blame the Allied commanders for not sending the airborne division to help in defending Rome, forgetting that he had just asked for that operation to be cancelled. About this whole episode Vailati, perhaps understandably, maintains a discreet silence.

Five days later, once he had reached the safety of Bari in the south, Badoglio gave a public explanation of his conduct that once again she fails to notice. "Once we had signed the armistice, it was my intention that the army should lay down its arms and abstain from any act of hostility against either side." This one phrase is enough to invalidate the main theme of this book. It may also help to explain why Mussolini, still Badoglio's prisoner, was not taken to Bari but was left where the Germans could rescue him a few days later. An even crueler and more repellent version of fascism was now restored to power in Rome, and the disastrous civil war that ensued was not the least result of these tragic miscalculations in September 1943.

alongside Mark Clark for fear that the conqueror of Rome might once more hog the limelight; he wanted a separate victory of his own. He managed to persuade Alexander that no good would come of forcing him to conform to a plan that he had no heart for. General Jackson thinks Alexander should have replaced him. That too would have caused delay; and any argument based on assuming decent weather at any given time in Italy is highly precarious.

The pitilessly persistent Italian rain, the clinging Italian mud, play a major role in the operations here brilliantly described. The battles are mainly soldiers' battles. Generalship improved on the British side when McCreery succeeded Leese; the Americans paid dearly for their advances as Mark Clark ruthlessly put his few remaining divisions through the mangle machine. On the German side Kesselring constantly requested, and Hitler refused, permission to withdraw across the Po to the Adige. The historian of the Italian campaign must in justice recognize Hitler's contribution to its success. As though written into the part by the Allies, he collaborated with the CCS in allowing his strongest divisions to be wasted on a secondary theatre.

The style of an age

Rupert Christiansen

JULIAN RUSHTON
Classical Music
192pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.95.
050001389 6
ARNOLD WHITTALL
Romantic Music: A concise history from
Schubert to Stravinsky
192pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.50.
050001401 9

Describing the effect of music in words is a perennial and insoluble problem – doubly so when the writer is deprived of recourse to any academic or technical discussion or even the imagery of textual examples. Thames and Hudson's editorial decision to knock away both these crutches, in deference to that constant feature of every hopeful publisher's catalogue, "the general reader without specialized knowledge", is certainly disabling to their brief volumes on the history of music; and for the books' other targeted market – "students of music from A level through to graduation" – Wilfrid Mellers's volumes in the *Man and his Music* series (1962) will remain more gristly instructive.

Nevertheless, Julian Rushton's *Classical Music* and Arnold Whittall's *Romantic Music* have much to recommend them. Both keep smartly up to date with modern musicology (even if its implications have to be drastically simplified), are written with confidence and personality, and stand a couple of cuts above the bland vade-mecum. Both present, in other words, something approaching an interpretation of a recognizable artistic era, not just an illustrated romp through the lives and loves of the great composers.

Classical Music broadly follows the Charles Rosen line on matters of form, but also makes some sharp initial points of its own, such as that "in the late eighteenth century, for the first time in the Christian era, secular music completely outstrips sacred music in importance". It is a strength of the book that it develops such statements and does more than make polite gestures towards putting music into "its full social and cultural context". It also gives the changes in instrument technology their proper weight as catalytic factors in composition; is notably lucid on the *opera seria* tradition and its variants; and strays tantalizingly into less familiar areas such as Italian sacred music and French Revolutionary opera.

Verbal engagements

Denis Stevens

GARY TOMLINSON
Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance
280pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.
019315151 0

After music, poetry was Monteverdi's most constant companion throughout his adult life. It was a relationship by no means devoid of difficulties, but in cases of doubt the composer would not hesitate to modify his chosen text, whether madrigalian or operatic. Like Richard Strauss, he felt himself master of the situation, especially in such matters as improvement, allusion, or ruthless cutting. Some of these issues, placed against a background of poetry, music and general cultural history, are discussed in Gary Tomlinson's book with skill and insight.

The author's principal aim is to examine the poetry in the light of Monteverdi's nine books of madrigals, certain works of slighter stature, and the few operas that have come down to us. Verses are quoted extensively, always with translations, and musical illustrations are generous. The mind of the musician should be more clearly revealed to us through these literary discussions and analyses. They are nothing if not thorough, but the approach is highly selective: the reader may fail to discover his favourite madrigal text.

He will, however, find the book constantly relevant of the doctoral dissertation from which it sprang. The candidate is all too clearly preoccupied with making a grand impression on the examiners, now succeeded by the cognoscenti, who will doubtless deal suitably with

Where Rushton falls short is in the more intangible matter of poetic imagination: denied his crutches, he has to fall back on clichés – "a floating melody over gentle pulsations which takes us near to heaven" – when it comes to describing sounds in words. Given the stronger pictorial content of Romantic music, it is perhaps unsurprising that Whittall's volume comes off more vividly in this respect.

However, Whittall has a harder job demarcating Romanticism – let alone defining the nature of the beast – as distinct from the nineteenth century. Rushton has the evolution of sonata form to give his "classical" premiss coherence, but Whittall can't make the collapse of tonality stick as a structuring arch with the same conviction and his book is particularly evasive about communicating the harmonic innovations of Berlioz, Chopin and Wagner (*Tristan* is scarcely mentioned) and the development of symphonic orchestration. Towards the end of the century, Whittall seems to lose focus altogether. French music washes

past in a great river of names, few of them getting more than a few lines. Elgar and Scriabin – both surely crucibles at the late stage of the story – are perfunctorily dealt with; and the rise of ballet music is inadequately acknowledged.

Still, Whittall's brief is a daunting one, and there is much else that is deftly handled: the seminal work of Weber and Spohr; a perspective on Donizetti, leaning heavily on William Ashbrook's recent monograph on the composer; a firm outline of Liszt's career and influence; and a noble peroration to a genius still under-appreciated in this country, Hugo Wolf.

Yet it is hard not to feel overall that the enterprise (Paul Griffiths's *Modern Music* being an earlier companion volume) is pitched just too low and cautious for the readership it claims to be addressing. Why do publishers and writers puzzle so timidly when it comes to the waters of music history? Where is the Peter Conrad of the genre, ready to risk combat, make connections and rhapsodize?



Maria Callas as Lady Macbeth in Verdi's *Macbeth* at La Scala, Milan, 1952; reproduced from David A. Lowe's *Callas: As they saw her* (264pp, with 70 black-and-white photographs. Robson. £14.95. 0 80051 411 0).

as Encina's "Una sañosa porfia" from the *Cancionero del Palacio*. If the search for influences looms large in an author's conscience, he should look far and wide. Verona and its musicians provide the key to Monteverdi's first book, and in "Sfogava con le stelle" (from Book Four) the root of the matter lies buried not in sacred music, but in the advocacy, as early as 1598, of *falsobordone* as a viable method for performing stage music; Angelo Ingegneri and Ferrara, rather than Rinuccini and Florence.

It would have been helpful in understanding musico-poetical inter-reactions had we been vouchsafed at least a fleeting account of the grouped madrigals, those on an almost symphonic scale, such as "Vattene pur, crudele" (based on an episode from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*), and "Ch'io t'ami", from Guarini's *Pastor fido*. The miniaturism of madrigalian essays has always received due homage, yet the larger scale and scope of epic writing also deserve consideration.

The strength of this book resides in its detailed treatment of the major poets, especially Guarini and Marino; and the effects they had on Monteverdi's sense of vocal style in all its variety and splendour. It was their imagination that sparked his own, their sensitive and brilliant play on words that persuaded him to enlarge harmonic and contrapuntal vocabulary at a time when it might have become stultified and unresponsive. They were fortunate in having Monteverdi as their musical spokesman, and he was supremely lucky to have been able to draw on such a wealth of elegant verso with which to launch his incomparable flights of inventive virtuosity.

Thirty-three lessons in composition

Denis Matthews

WILLIAM KINDERMAN
Beethoven's Diabelli Variations
220pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
0 19 315323 8

William Kinderman's monograph – the second in a new series of *Studies in Musical Genesis and Structure* – has a twofold purpose: to survey the latest research into the creation of Beethoven's greatest set of variations, and so to underline and illumine the form and range of character of the work itself.

The general background is well known: Beethoven, having rejected the idea of contributing to a symposium of variations on Diabelli's waltz, wrote a complete set himself; it was hailed by Diabelli as a worthy successor to Bach's "Goldberg" Variations. Analysts like Karl Geiringer who sought to align the structure of the two works are now, however, proved "outrageously unsatisfactory": the asymmetry of Beethoven's plan, culminating in the profundities of the last five variations, is demonstrated by Dr Kinderman with special reference to the sketches. These fall into two groups. Although Schindler reported that Beethoven had scorned the text as "a cobbler's patch", Diabelli's mundane waltz with its mechanical sequences was, as Tovey remarked, full of "solid musical facts", all of which proved an endless resource for the late-period Beethoven's invention and imagination. This is apparent from the grandiose first variation, which seems to set the scale of the undertaking – although we now learn that it was inserted at a later stage. Much more about the order of events may be gleaned from the sketches. Their scattering and varied location were, however, obstacles for earlier scholars and the pioneer Gustav Nottebohm may be forgiven for assuming that most of the work dated from 1822, when Beethoven resumed it after a gap of three years. It appears that the 1819 sketches were far more extensive and the author draws on the recent researches by Sieghard Brandenburg and Robert Winter.

Kinderman's earlier chapters concentrate on the sketches and their provenance, and his later tabulation and transcription of the material, running to nearly eighty pages of music-type, is extremely valuable. Some of his other music examples are, however, awkwardly placed in the text and it is a pity that there is not clear labelling throughout. In view of the high scholarship involved there are too many missed accidents in quotations from the finished work – and one vital missing signature (ex 59). The extent of Beethoven's initial work, covering two-thirds of the variations, is, however, admirably clarified. When he returned to it in 1822 he added variations 1, 2 and 15 and greatly expanded the later stages, the minor-key variations, the fugue and its ethereal aftermath. There were to be cross-currents with the intervening Op 111 sonata, whose Arietta seemed to adopt the opening contours of the waltz and in turn lent material to the coda of the Diabelli set, a point illustrated twice with music examples.

In discussing Beethoven's compositional style the author goes on to analyse the individual variations, challenging the accepted groupings and adopting a convincing threefold division, viewing the last nine variations as a gradual "consolidation and transfiguration". He also devotes a chapter to the recurring element of parody, most obvious in the famous *Don Giovanni* quotation. Was this Beethoven's hint that like Leporello he was wearing himself out night and day over the task? Dr Kinderman sees more subtle innuendoes here, referring to Leporello's ironic detachment, capacity for disguise, and critical but faithful allegiance to his master. Beethoven's allegiance to Diabelli's waltz did not prevent him from giving it thirty-three lessons in the art of composition and especially in the matter of sequences. The processes are excellently reviewed in this new addition to Beethoven scholarship.

Behind the screens

Lorna Sage

Back in its earliest days, thirty years ago, the film festival at Taormina and Messina was a whistle-stop on the international glamour circuit. In 1958, for instance, there were Marion Brando, Charles Laughton, Anna Magnani, Vittorio de Sica and (almost) Marilyn Monroe, who was awarded a "Donatello's David", but didn't arrive to collect it. The *dolce vita* set from Rome went on vacation there, drifting snobbishly south to primitive Sicily. Someone staged a strip-tease in the Greek theatre; many others fell fully-dressed into swimming pools. A bit later Richard Burton and/or Peter O'Toole got very drunk there. The mythology of celluloid flourished and gave birth to its own strange local flora and fauna – like the tiny, white-bearded Barone La Lumia (seldom glimpsed at other times, mainly famous for the house-warming party he staged for his museum) who paraded the Corso along the starlets, with his raven on his shoulder.

All was as it should be. But then came 1968: after a battle (and a lot of seminars) the festival was deglamorized and dragged into cultural politics, with a new competitive section (inaugurated in 1971) based in Taormina and for films reflecting "new expressive tendencies (new authors, new schools, countries with less frequent international programming)" as the current rule-book has it. The old pagan deities of the box-office have never gone away, though. More a matter of "the devil sprinkling himself with holy water", according to the *Corriere della Sera*. And the result is that nowadays, as the artistic directors Sandro Anastasi and Mario Natale cheerfully admit, it's a thoroughly schizophrenic carnival: "the cinema has two souls, it lives on contradictions, and we go forward on two paths that are almost always divergent . . .". Two seems rather an understatement. One "soul", certainly, resides in the competition: another in the elaborate retrospectives (Joseph Losey in 1984, Roger Corman in 1985, Brian de Palma in 1986, this year the Australian "lost wave") which have become a distinctive feature of Taormina and Messina: another, a lot less certainly, in the "American Film Week" (five years old in this form, but unmistakably the old devil in a new guise).

Perhaps Taormina's own exotic topography, suspended on its cliff, looking across to Etna, is responsible for the metaphysical tinge to the analogies. This year they sprang to mind with dreadful ease because the days of the Festival (July 16-25) coincided with the lethal heat-

wave. Little Etna threatened all around, fires crackled in the grass, cacti roasted on the road-sides and cinemas turned to ovens. Money burned too: the 1987 Festival cost 1.2 billion lire (around £600,000), 200 million of which came from the Italian central government, and the rest from the Sicilian Region, the Province of Messina, and the tiny city of Taormina itself. Staying on the international map is expensive.

What the money goes on is securing the films, the stars, the media coverage and the international jury, which included this year the Russian director Nikita Mikhailov, the Senegalese director Safy Faye, Rossano Brazzi (a gallant reminder of the old carefree days, with his poodle in a shopping bag), director Werner Schroeter from West Germany, and from Britain Angela Carter who (the press noted with interest) arrived wearing a baseball cap and a long skirt ("late feminist", they hazarded). The sixteen films in the competition (some of them perhaps in the event not quite so colourful or classy as the judges) came from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Africa and Western and Eastern Europe. One even came from the USA (*China Girl*, by Driller Killer director Abel Ferrara), but there was an unmistakable air of "otherness" about them (partly to do with some tiny budgets) and the contrast with the American Film Week offerings (which included the new James Bond) was as paradigmatic as any metaphysician could wish.

Thus, the opening days saw *Ngai* (The Tribe) by New Zealand director Barry Barclay, himself part-Maori – a pastoral and lyrical film about roots – juxtaposed with John McTiernan's *Predator*, with Arnold Schwarzenegger confronting the Other in the form of an alien presence in the South American jungle. *Ngai*'s Maori star, Wi Kuki Kaa (a veteran of *Muliny on the Bounty*), rubbed in the contrast by greeting the assembled spectators with a traditional pantheistic salute "from my mountains to your mountains, from my river to your river, from my ancestors to your ancestors . . .". Meanwhile, the American film-makers put out the odd tentacle from the other side of the divide. Director Susan Seidelman, who "moulded" Madonna in *Desperately Seeking Susan*, wittily disappointed expectations with *Making Mr Right*, and its innocent android hero. And *The Living Daylights* (all \$35 million of it) was represented in the flesh (to the enormous disappointment of the photographers, who'd been looking forward to a bevy of Bond girls) by Art Malik (an Afghan freedom fighter in the film). However, once again, the programme produced a savage contrast, with *Yam Daabo* (The Choice), made for

around £60,000 by Idrissa Ouedraogo from Burkina Faso – a "resettlement" film with the shape of a folk-tale, and a happy ending, which carried, he said, "a message for the West, which goes on believing, wrongly, that African peoples are only famished hordes, passively waiting for help".

Already, the competition had become something of an African event, not only because of the heat, but because two other films – *La Vie est Belle*, a musical by Benoit Lamy set in Zaïre and *Saturday Night at the Palace* from South Africa, based on Paul Slabolepsky's anti-apartheid play by director Robert Davies – had caught the critics' attention. Africa had become, suddenly, what Australia was in the mid-1970s, when the Taormina jury had, with remarkable prescience, given first prizes to Ken Hannan's *Sunday Too Far Away* (1975) and Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1976). It's sometimes claimed that Taormina "discovered" Australia all by itself. Certainly, there was a particular appropriateness about the scholarly retrospective, *L'Ultima Onda* (The Last Wave, named after Peter Weir's 1977 film, and the 1980 book by David Stratton, director of the Sydney Festival). And though the many films involved were crowded into the interstices of the other events in Taormina, at least ten of them (including Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* and Ian Pringle's *Wrong World*) will be touring major Italian cities North and South during the rest of the year. It's the most concentrated span of attention yet given in Europe to the new Australian cinema, and is accompanied by a book-cum-catalogue (*L'Ultima Onda* edited by Filippo D'Angelo and Carmelo Marabellio. Florence: La Casa Usher. Lire 28,000), which pays learned homage to the new antipodean spaces so teasingly like – and yet so unlike – those of Hollywood's West. But will African cinema ever achieve anything like the same currency in Europe, or the States? *Yam Daabo*, it's true, is due for a Parisian release; however, Wi Kuki Kaa sounded a note of scepticism about African/Australian analogies: from the New Zealand point of view, he said, Australians look arrogant and expansionist. The very qualities the *cinéastes* love – those spaces and far-away horizons – look to him like a sinister lack of proportion.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

- Antony Alpers is the author of *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*, 1980. His *Legends of the South Seas*, 1970, is reissued this month as *The World of the Polynesians*.
- Richard Aldrich's most recent book is *Evil Encounters: Two Victorian sensations*, which will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.
- Chris Baldick is the author of *Frankenstein's Shadow*, which will be published at the end of this year, and of *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932*, which appeared in 1983.
- John Butt's books include *Writers and Politics in Modern Spain*, 1979. He is a lecturer in Spanish at King's College, London.
- Judith Chermak's new novel, *Leah*, is published next week.
- Rupert Christiansen's *Prima Donna* was published in 1984.
- John Martin Fischer is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Yale University, and the editor of *Moral Responsibility*, 1986.
- Dan Gurn's *Psychoanalysis and Fiction: An exploration of literary and psychoanalytic borders* will be published this autumn.
- M. J. Heale's most recent book is *The American Revolution*, 1986. He is Reader in History at the University of Lancaster.
- Robert Hewison's *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a climate of decline* will be published in October.
- Sir David Hunt served in Crete in May 1941. His books include *Footprints in Cyprus*, 1982.
- Gabriel Jarrold's most recent novel, *Contre-Jour*, 1986, was short-listed for the Whitbread Prize.
- Peter Kemp's *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Age* was published in 1982.
- Peter Lamarque is the author of *Philosophy and Fiction: Essays in literary aesthetics*, 1983. He lectures in Philosophy at the University of Stirling.
- Lechlan Mackinnon's poems appeared in *New Chaito Poets*, 1986.
- Denis Mack Smith's *The Making of Italy, 1796-1866*, first published in 1968, will be reissued shortly.
- Denis Matthews's books include *The Master Musicians Beethoven*, 1985. He is a concert pianist.
- Roger Mettman's *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France* will be published later this year.
- A. W. Moore is a Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at King's College, Cambridge.
- Roger Nichols is the author of *Messiah*, 1975.
- Martha Nussbaum is Professor of Philosophy, Classics and Literature at Brown University. Her *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and ethics in Greek tragedy and philosophy* was published last year.
- Philip Pettit co-edited (with Alan Hamlin) *The Good Polity*, which will be published shortly, and co-authored (with John McDowell) *Subject, Thought and Context*, 1986. He is Professorial Fellow in the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.
- Roy Porter is a lecturer at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London. His books include *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 1982.
- Michael Rosen is a lecturer in Philosophy at University College London. His *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism* was published in 1982.
- Lorna Sage is a lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.
- Samuel Scheffler is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of *The Reflection of Consequentialism*, 1982.
- Dennis Stevens translated Monteverdi's correspondence, collected in *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, 1980.
- Mary Tiles is the author of *Beckett's Drama: Science and Objectivity*, 1984.
- Sir John Trevellick is British Ambassador to Brazil. His latest travel book *Travels on the Amazon*, 1986.
- Andrew Woodfield's *Thought and Object: Essays on intentionality* was published in 1982. He lectures in Philosophy at the University of Bristol.

Letters

A Threat to Latin

Sir, – Readers of the TLS will need no reminding of the influence of the school curriculum upon a society's cultural and intellectual aspirations. Consequently, we should like to draw the attention of your readers to the implications of the educational reforms which the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Kenneth Baker, plans shortly to impose on all state schools in England and Wales. The centrepiece of these reforms is the "core curriculum" which, it is proposed, will take up 80-90 per cent of the timetable in years 1-3 of secondary school (children aged 11-14).

Clearly there will be very serious implications indeed for subjects outlawed from the "core" at this critical stage of a child's education, since there will be so few periods a week left for every other kind of activity. Hence our concern. We are classicists and Mr Baker proposes to debar Latin as an "allowable" subject under the languages slot of the "core curriculum" at this stage.

The consequence of this proposal will be effectively to end the study of Latin in the 20-25 per cent of our state schools which currently teach it (that figure is an informed guess: even the Department of Education and Science does not know what it is). Of course, some schools may choose to devote the little space left on the timetable in years 1-3 to classical subjects, but with so many other important subjects competing for space, it seems unlikely. Again, there will be a few state school-brothers here and there where able linguists begin Latin in year 4 and sit a public examination in it at year 5, or scramble through it in the sixth form. But for, say, 95 per cent of state schools the economics of the situation will never permit them to maintain a Latinist to deal with such small numbers. When the subject has disappeared from our state schools, the pressure to phase it out of the private sector will increase, and that pressure will inevitably spread to universities. Once Latin (and Greek) is gone, there will be no recall. It will be gone for good.

The knock-on effect for the study of humanities in particular, and for the depth, breadth and richness of our cultural and intellectual life in general, will be serious and lasting. It is not being sensationalist to suggest that, if these proposals become law, in twenty-five years' time it will only be with the greatest difficulty that a young British scholar will be able to make any contribution at all, let alone a worthwhile one, to the study of much of the language, literature and culture of Britain and Europe from 1000 BC to the nineteenth century. For a government which puts "freedom" and "choice" at the top of its political agenda, the effective outlawing of the classical languages from our schools will be a superbly hypocritical achievement, especially at a time when some 6,500 undergraduates are studying classics in one form or another at our universities (more than was the case fifteen years ago).

The Government may, of course, have rigorous evidence demonstrating that the

pessimistic scenario we paint will not, in fact, occur. If it does, we should like to see it. If it does not, we suggest it should gather it before the impression of proceeding along its chosen lines out of ignorance, though some will see it as prejudice or malice. But our plea is one of devastating modesty. Mr Baker should make Latin an allowable – not a compulsory, but an allowable – subject in years 1-3 of the "core curriculum" in secondary schools. Heavens, it seems little enough to ask. We urge those who feel as we do to write to the Secretary of State, DES, Elizabeth House, York Road, London SE1 7PH as soon as possible, and certainly before the closing date for comments, September 30, 1987.

P. V. JONES.
Department of Classics, The University, Newcastle upon Tyne.
A. J. SPOONER.
Park View Comprehensive School, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham.

Glory of the Garden?

Sir, – Your review of the Florentine production of Purcell's *Fairy Queen* (Commentary, July 24) brings to mind a plea for state assistance for the arts made by its anonymous adaptor from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1692. He wrote:

That a few private Persons should venture on so expensive a Work as an Opera, when none but Princes, or States exhibit 'em abroad, I hope is no Dishonour to our Nation: And I dare affirm if we had half the Encouragement in England, that they have in other Countries, you might in a short time have as good Dancers in England as they have in France, though I despair of ever having as good Voices among us, as they have in Italy.

Mr Luce take note.
Incidentally, Purcell's opera was initially performed at the Dorset Garden Theatre, not at the nearby Covent Garden.

HENRY MERRITT.
21 Cyprus Road, Cambridge.

Forgotten Form

Sir, – As a Briton living in Canada, I was astonished at Ian Thomson's lack of discrimination, in his review of Primo Levi's *The Wreath* (June 5), in mentioning, in one breath, the expressions "goofed off" and "gotten", and labelling both as "(infelicitous) Americanisms".

British and Americans alike correctly say "forget-forgot-forgotten". Americans equally correctly say "get-got-gotten". No self-respecting American writer or translator would think of saying "I have got", any more than a Briton would think of saying "I have forgot".

Whatever Mr Thomson's views may be on the older and more correct form of the past participle, let him at least refrain from bracketing it with slang.

WILLIAM STODDART.
11450 Riverside Drive East, Windsor, Ontario, N8P 1A4, Canada.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 341
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 28. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries marked "Author, Author 341" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on September 4.

1 The heave are, it seems, the usual three: Husband and wife, and lover. She – Iel in England we'll not hear of it. Edmond. The lover, her devout chagrin doth share; Blame whence and abjunct he his penitent fare, Till his pale aspect makes her over-fond.

2 "One arm, one pieper, yain as Pretty Poll, A meddler, too, in foreign politics And gave his heart in pawn to a plain moll!" Robert Graves, "1805".

3 Around his throat his ribbons. His high-hat on his head. Mates, in that tidily uniform: He was already dead. His five of decorations He ferried on the flood, The four all made of silver And one all made of biopd. Charles Cawley, "The Sentinel's Story, 1803".

4 Then in 1900 everybody got down off his stilts:

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Basil Blackwell

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Russian writers in Edinburgh

Peter France

One of the main features of this year's Edinburgh Festival will be a series of concerts, plays, puppet shows and exhibitions from the Soviet Union; mostly this will be concentrated in the first week, from August 9 to August 15. The star attraction no doubt is the Gorky Theatre of Leningrad, with two productions by the renowned Georgy Tovstonogov, Chekhov's *Uncle Yanya* and the 1975 adaptation of Tolstoy's fierce story of a horse, *Kholostomer*, with Evgeny Lebedev in the title role. Alongside these more spectacular events (there will also be a troupe of dancers and singers from the far North) we are promised several appearances by Soviet writers, mainly poets, reading their work in Russian with accompanying translations.

Top of the bill, perhaps inevitably, is Evgeny Yevtushenko, who will be doing two readings in the King's Theatre on Friday, August 14. There will also be readings by Nigel Hawthorn of Antonia W. Boule's translations of Yevtushenko's verse and a round table of conference in which Yevtushenko will take part alongside Tovstonogov and others. It is well over twenty years now since Yevtushenko and Voznesensky first electrified Western audiences with their highly charged and politically adventurous public performances. Yevtushenko has continued to publish great quantities of long and short poems, together with collections of essays and quite recently a novel

translated as *Wild Berries*. Now in his mid-fifties, he has been greatly honoured in his own country, where his two-volume *Selected Poems* of 1975 has recently been followed by a big three-volume *Collected Poems*.

The other literary visitor who is relatively well-known in the West is Fazil Iskander, a native of the Black Sea republic of Abkhazia, who may be considered as a representative of the many Soviet writers of non-Russian origin who now write in Russian. Iskander has written poems, but is best known for his humorous, good-tempered but sharp-eyed tales and novels, mostly set in his native land. At least two of these have been published in English; in particular *Sandra from Cheghel*, which was recently published by Penguin.

The other three writers, all of them poets, have so far not been much translated into English, if at all. Two of them are virtually unknown here, the young poet Gennady Kravkov, author of two small volumes of verse and editor of a poetry review, and Vitaly Korotkiy, who writes in Ukrainian and is on the editorial board of the popular weekly *Ogonyok*. The one to watch, however, is probably Oleg Chukhontsev, an interesting and highly regarded poet with a strong lyrical and rhythmic gift. Apart from Yevtushenko, these writers will be grouped into two programmes each of which will be given twice between August 11 and August 15, namely in St Cecilia's Hall. Two Scottish poets, Edwin Morgan and Stephen Mulrine, will also be taking part. Further details are available from the Edinburgh Festival Office 031 226 4001.

COMMENTARY

Faith in the fortunate

John Butt

MANUEL PUIG
Mystery of the Rose Bouquet
Donmar Warehouse

Not the least of the qualities of Manuel Puig's output is its evenness. He is best known in the English-speaking world for *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, of which the Bush Theatre's version in 1985 was much more memorable than the film. But his other books and plays all share a distinctive, rather elusive quality: an attractive, faintly mischievous faith in human nature which occasionally teeters on the verge of sentimentality but is usually pulled back in the nick of time by a pungent joke.

The new play, of which this is the world première, in some ways recalls *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. The two characters, an elderly dragon from the Buenos Aires aristocracy, a class infamous for its snobbery and insecurity, and her self-effacing and defeated private nurse are also imprisoned, this time not in a prison cell but in a private clinic; and they also find themselves locked in an elaborate power-struggle which leads to a quite unforeseen reversal of roles. The first part ends with an intriguing and impudent coup de théâtre. And as so often in Puig's work, in the process of trying to destroy one another with lies and betrayals, the characters discover a common humanity which defeats their loneliness and relieves them from a burden of destructive illusions.

This is an intense, psychologically elaborate play which seems to fill the stage with different voices and characters, and calls forth the powers of two fine actresses. Brenda Bruce is impressive as the disillusioned, vengeful and yet irrepressibly kindly widow, who has decided that her best years were thrown away on a conventional marriage and a philandering husband, but who slowly discovers through her nurse that her late-life bitterness is not entirely reasonable. Gemma Jones has the more diffi-

cult part as the nurse. Pitiful but manipulative, she represents an alternative destiny which is both modern and in some ways enviable to an embittered Buenos Aires dowager: a spinsterish life given up to a career, but nevertheless a life haunted by romanticized hankering after the conventions of marriage and children which defeated her patient.

A stormy battle of wills ensues as each tries to establish her own defeatism as the only judgment that will fit the facts of her own biography. But slowly the two bring their feelings about the other into line with their feelings about themselves and they are reluctantly drawn together as they recognize a common bitterness about men. At which point, Puig's characteristic good nature takes over and they are made to see that they did once in fact both win the love of a man but have been blinded to the fact by clinging fantasies about marriage and the "proper" fate of women.

Puig has a passion for mediocre characters who are regenerated through sudden insights. This makes for subtle texts: since the characters cannot be too lucid, their situation is revealed in dreams, flashbacks and exchanges whose symbolic content has to be clarified by skilful directing. Puig's faith in his characters' capacity for improbable self-discoveries also imposes a hectic emotional pace, speeded up by his predilection for theatrical turns of fortune. The play is consequently quite dense: it packs an inordinate amount of emotional growth into a small space and it needs an attentive audience. Robert Allan Ackerman's sophisticated and skilful direction of Allan J. Baker's translation is well supported by subtle lighting and thoughtful costume design, by a grasp of the text's intricacies and by fluent and perceptive acting. *Mystery of the Rose Bouquet* is a magnificent success, a truly impressive reminder, if anyone still needs it, of the fact that Latin American writing can cope with the convoluted individual just as well as with broad social and political themes.

Dramatic principles

Judith Chernaik

HOWARD ZINN
Rebel in Paradise
Young Vic Studio

The rebel in *Rebel in Paradise* is the celebrated anarchist and feminist Emma Goldman, who campaigned for free speech, free love, birth control and prison reform, and against militarism and the draft, issues on which her views are now widely accepted. "Paradise" is America, land of the free, where Goldman was imprisoned for a year in 1893 for speeches inciting to riot, and again for twenty months in 1917 "for conspiracy to induce persons not to register for the draft". In 1919, when she was fifty, she was deported to her native Russia. (She left again two years later, bitterly disillusioned, and eventually became a British citizen.)

Howard Zinn comes to his subject with sound credentials; an American professor, author of a "People's History" of the United States, long a civil-rights activist, he was a leading speaker at the mass anti-war rallies in the 1960s. The Moving Target company is staging his play, first produced in New York ten years ago, in the hopes of promoting "positive images of women"; sponsorship by NALGO has won support from the Government's Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme.

This tribute to "the most dangerous woman in America" presents a sympathetic and strong heroine, who is mildly correct in her beliefs, if not always prudent in her behaviour. Played with charm and conviction by Michele Costa, she is probably a good deal more attractive than the short, squat and pug-nosed Goldman who glowers from the archive photographs. Zinn sensibly confines his story to the years leading up to the deportation. The Russian-Jewish family background is briefly sketched; a scene in a garment sweatshop demonstrates the power of spontaneous resistance by four young women workers (no evidence for this in the biography, as far as I

know). We then plunge into the lower East Side world of immigrant revolutionaries, where Emma meets the brilliant Russian nihilist, Alexander ("Sasha") Berkman (intelligently realized by Adam Gazer). Within a year they have set up a commune, and are planning the assassination of the steel magnate Henry Clay Frick, whose Pinkerton thugs have just attacked locked-out steelworkers in Homestead, Pennsylvania.

Principles are notoriously hard to dramatize and the focus soon shifts from youthful idealism to the ironies of Goldman's love life. While Sasha, her first love and lifelong comrade, is serving fourteen years for attempted murder, Emma becomes hopelessly dependent on a libertine, who, as her manager, parrots her ideas and infects them with his own tawdriness. The fearless campaigner for women's sexual freedom becomes the slave of passion; her public speeches are interspersed with scenes of liberation turned sour; there is a hint of lesbian solace. But Emma's prison experiences humanize her; her training as a midwife adds a practical dimension to her feminism. The contemporary parallels throughout are inescapable, not only to the contradictions of feminism, but to the recurrent paranoia afflicting democratically elected politicians.

Political theatre presents tremendous risks and temptations; even Ibsen, a self-styled anarchist whose plays Goldman championed, ironically, and insisted that he was being misread by his followers. In the end, *Rebel in Paradise*, stressing the errors, enthusiasm and high spirits of Goldman and her comrades, falls short of intellectual engagement with the issues which to them were matters of life and death. Instead, it offers an enjoyable evening in the theatre, enhanced by music, lighted by a wry humour, and contains moments of real power, as in Sasha's return from prison. Indeed, Sasha is the most interesting character, not for what he says, but for his uncompromising belief in the cause, which alone makes sense of his bungled life.

Death masks

David Nokes

Hemingway
BBC1

BBC television's four-part portrait of Hemingway began with his death. This was not, as it turned out, merely a conventional device, but the statement of a theme. Death and dying ran through these programmes like an epidemic. Marc Smith, as the voice of Hemingway, spoke his lines in a deadpan monotone that contrived to turn each anecdote into a fragment from an elegy. The narrative proceeded at a solemn obituary pace, the screen filling with the frozen smiles of old photographs while the hushed notes of funeral-parlour Liszt played in the background. Hemingway's old buddies, now frail and ancient, appeared like death's-heads wrung in cardigans, hunched in their chintz armchairs, recalling their brawling mad-cap days in melancholy tones. "He died in imagination", said one, speaking of Hemingway's wounding in the First World War. "All the heroes are dead", intoned the voice of Hemingway. "Dying is a very easy thing." This was, we recognized, a dying echo of a prophetic exchange from his "Indian Camp" story. "Is dying hard, daddy?" the same voice asked, this time in the persona of Nick Adams. "No, I think it's pretty easy, Nick." The Nick Adams stories, said Malcolm Cowley sadly, were "terrifically fresh and new". But it was a freshness tinged with death, like the *Morte D'Arthur*; a remembered springtime made new by the sense of death lurking round every corner. "Do many men kill themselves, daddy?" Nick Adams asked. "Not very many, Nick." Not very many, but among their number were included both Hemingway and his father.

The second and third episodes switched the emphasis from dying to killing with lengthy film sequences of Spanish bull-fights and African safaris which hovered uneasily between holiday travelogues and literary analogies. The matador, Hemingway believed, demonstrated "the true enjoyment of killing... one of the most profound feelings known to man". Yet by using a slow-motion image of death in the bull-ring as a kind of visual logo for the series, the director Anna Benson Cyles reduced Hemingway's physical excitement at the violence of

killing to part of an aestheticized frieze of death. On his own expeditions to the killing fields of Africa Hemingway took enough artillery with him to equip a small guerrilla army. And when the lions and rhinos failed to appear, as his English hosts recalled, "he was always looking for a punch-up". He blundered into "this Spanish business" in much the same spirit of big game adventure, taking pot shots at Stukas instead of rhinos. Enrique Lister, former commander of the Fifth International brigade, looking rather like a rhino that had got away, was contemptuous about Hemingway's Civil War activities. "He understood nothing about the war." For *Whom the Bell Tolls* he described as "an extremely tedious book". This was clearly a man for whom the earth had not moved.

From time to time these programmes hitched a lift from a guided tour of Hemingway's Key West home. This was a dangerous narrative gimmick. It was never possible to be sure whether we were supposed to be amused or edified by the guide's routine patter as he shepherded a coach-load of trippers through this Hemingway museum, crying "I have pictures here of all four wives", as if exhibiting trophies. As the camera lingered over the typewriter on which Hemingway had tapped out *For Whom the Bell Tolls* it seemed as if these programmes shared the guide's belief that a bulging scrap-book and a few cherished exhibits add up to a literary analysis.

The main disappointments of the portrait were its failure to explore Hemingway's compulsive posturing and yet the peculiar energy of his style. Though constantly complaining at the public's fascination with his reputation for barroom brawling, Hemingway's pursuit of the "one true sentence" was constantly overshadowed by his love of cocky poses. Among the self-conscious images of Hemingway in Basque beret or safari helmet, in fisherman's jersey or battle fatigues, the pictures of him at the typewriter seemed just another action-movie pose. About his style, the most intriguing suggestion was that it was based on the style-sheet of the *Kansas City Star* whose cardinal rule was "use short sentences". These programmes offered a predictable portrait of Hemingway as public performer; what they failed to provide was an understanding of the writer inside the tough-guy.

Beloved objects

Simon Burt

PETER GILL
Mean Tears
Cottesloe Theatre

The curt truth of the matter is that the state of being loved is intolerable to many. Intolerable and necessary. Not that this truth is all that curly stated in Peter Gill's new play, *Mean Tears*, a lengthy and graceful exploration of sterility. The story concerns a poisonous quadrille danced by two spectacularly dreadful people. The one, Julian, the beloved, is portrayed by Bill Nighy in a whirlwind performance, whinings, gangling, head-tossing, charging about, occasionally rearing abruptly to a halt like a colt confronted with a mirror. The other, Stephen, the lover, played grittily by a grimaced Karl Johnson, is an accomplished marauder, who clearly sees himself as a Catullus, a Swann, a noble spirit, endlessly shackled to a love-object who could be true to himself, or at least to him, but who will not.

There is a moment, early in the first act, that encapsulates this relationship: a balletic pause, during which each sits in his own space, involved in his own concerns. One rolls a joint. One drinks a coffee. Joint and cup are raised simultaneously. And we might, at first we do, mistake this for one of those moments when the beloved's presence is solitude, and two are as one, or for a *par de deux*. But then we see that it isn't that at all. What we are in fact watching is two contemporaneous solos, each dancer locked in empty contiguity, a dual *pas seul*.

And so it continues throughout the play. Stephen and Julian circle each other, each

spouting arias of self-obsession, each delighting in his pain, each approaching and retreating from the mirror of the other, touching the other only in order to rebound, until we reach the end. The end of the play, that is. The relationship will run and run. There can be no progress or change when both partners so fervently resist them. There they both still are, fast asleep, one dreaming of himself, the other dreaming of breaking into the other's dream to force him to dream of him.

Mean Dreams is a moving, powerful and compulsive portrait of contemporary life. The dialogue reflects the overprivileged need of the characters. Gushing, staccato and freighted with allusion, it tacks to its contradictory conclusion as confused and confusing as they are. The acting is superlatively, hallucinarily accurate. It is very tiring to watch, but, considering the effort that goes into maintaining the sort of relationship the play describes, that is only appropriate.

The third Edinburgh Book Festival will take place in Charlotte Square Gardens, Edinburgh from August 8 to 23. The Festival will be opened by P. D. James and among the writers taking part will be Maya Angelou, Kazuo Ishiguro, Marilyn French, Hunter S. Thompson, Ved Mehta, Edmund White, Michael Ondaatje and Ryszard Kapuscinski. The events - readings, discussion groups, signing sessions, lectures, cookery demonstrations and concerts - will take place each day from 10am to 6pm and there will be a children's fair as part of the programme. Further information is available from Edinburgh Book Festival, 20 South West Thistle Street, Edinburgh, ED1 1EW (031-2251915).

The mechanics of marvels

Roger Nichols

MAURICE RAVEL
L'Heure espagnole and
L'Enfant et les sortilèges.
Glyndebourne Festival Opera

One of the earliest complaints directed at Ravel's music was against what his critics saw as an arbitrarily assumed artificiality. "Does it not occur to these people", Ravel replied, "that I may be artificial by nature?" Certainly he took particular pleasure in observing how things worked, whether it was a mechanical bird or an orchestral crescendo, but one question whether the interaction of human beings engaged his interest quite to the same extent: of the love between man and woman he once said "it never rises above the licentious". We might therefore reasonably expect any opera from his pen to mark out different territory from the *Carmens* and *Manons* he grew up with.

The first of his two operas, *L'Heure espagnole*, shows the "artificial" Ravel in the clearest possible light. The setting in the shop of the clockmaker Torquemada gave him the soundest of excuses to indulge his love of mechanical objects and the introduction to the opera is a miraculous symphony of ticking, whirring, hooting and ping-pong which has not been improved on by any member of any avant-garde over the past seventy-five years. The problems begin with the entry of the human characters. Franc-Nohain's play, which Ravel took over almost unchanged, is in the Feydeau mould with grandfather clocks ticking

the place of bedroom doors, and the whole thing needs to go at a spanking pace with every nuance of the text given its due weight, no more and no less. The very richness of Ravel's orchestration not only militates against the audibility of the words but necessarily slows the pace, so that continually inventive direction is needed to tide the piece over some *longueurs*. (Even if Ravel in his early thirties was already an orchestrator *sans pareil*, the same cannot be said of him as an operatic architect.)

Frank Corsaro's production has many entertaining moments but also too many dull ones when nothing much seems to be happening except in the orchestra. His idea of turning Torquemada into a puppet-master, manipulating not only clocks but also his wife and her three lovers, is ingenious but, in presenting him as a complaisant cuckold, it further reduces the emotional temperature of this already cold-hearted story, very much against the grain of the warm, beautiful sounds Simon Rattle is drawing from the London Philharmonic Orchestra; against the grain too of Maurice Sendak's glowing rose and ochre sets, full of Mediterranean sensuality and languor. However voluptuously and vampishly Anna Steiger smoulders her way through the role of Concepcion, Torquemada's man-eating spouse, she too works in vain against the production's un-natural artificiality. One is left not really caring what happens to any of them and attention is more profitably bestowed on François Le Roux's superb diction and easy stage presence as the muleteer Ramiro - on this showing, no puppet he.

In the fourteen years between the premières of *L'Heure espagnole* in 1911 and of *L'Enfant*

et les sortilèges in 1925, Ravel learnt important lessons about operatic pacing and especially about the need to include passages of lyrical repose. Colette's story of the little boy who, goaded by uncongenial homework into a spate of furniture, animal and insect abuse, is in turn tormented by his victims may seem at first glance to be as artificial as Franc-Nohain's, but it is redeemed by love - not of the "licentious" variety, but by the filial/maternal love which for Ravel, as for Colette, was probably the most powerful emotion of his life. The resulting opera is one of Ravel's greatest works and also one of the hardest pieces of musical theatre to bring off.

There may be quibbles over some details of Corsaro's production (the appearance of a father, unspecified in the score, who is presumably supposed to excite the child's sexual jealousy, and the failure to underline the cataclysmic outbursts of "Maman" on full orchestra by a flood of light, which is specified) but time and again he gets right to the heart of the opera. The episode of the princess, exquisitely sung by Carolyn Blackwell, was one of those moments one experiences in a theatre every ten years if one is lucky. Sendak uses one of his trademark pop-ups here - a castle silhouetted against a golden Edwardian fairyland, one of his many magical combinations of new techniques with old. His animations projected on to the gauze which conceals and reveals the nursery and the garden are a perfect example of how the "artificial" can serve the "natural" and wholly in keeping with the aesthetic of the composer who, according to his brother, dreamt of this opera being presented as a Walt Disney cartoon film.



A plaster model for the monument of Jörg von Sack (1483), in Heilsbrunn Cathedral, reproduced from the Bayreuth Lohengrin programme.

tain falls on the unredeemed winter of the world.

Peter Schneider conducts serviceably, Manfred Schenk brings out all the poetry and nobility in King Henry's various orations, and Paul Frey, a Canadian tenor, is a wonderfully promising Lohengrin, combining sweetness and stiffness in a way ideal for the part. Catarina Ligendza, in Bayreuth to sing Isolde, stood in as Elsa on the first night; her passionate and adult reading of the role only added to the pathos of Herzog's vision.

Plans for the 1987-8 Covent Garden season include a revival of Elijah Moshinsky's *Lohengrin*, with Plácido Domingo, in June, and a new production of *Parsifal*, conducted by Bernard Haitink, in January.

Post-Christian miracles

Alan Hollinghurst

RICHARD WAGNER
Lohengrin
Festspielhaus, Bayreuth

Dreams and ideals are the essence of *Lohengrin*; when Elsa of Brabant's dream-hope materializes, proposes to her, defends her, and agrees to lead the Brabantian troops in battle, exonerated, marriage, love, leadership and victory are all secured in a moment. The desolate poignancy of the work springs from the weathering and destruction of this dream under the pressure of evil and the force of plain human nature - for Lohengrin has set conditions on his marriage which no human wife could abide by.

At Bayreuth Werner Herzog, whose finest films have been studies of visionaries and outsiders, struggling against ferocious odds, presents this process in a series of tableaux of remarkable beauty. The transcendental, symbolic deployment of nature in his films is recreated for the stage, where, aided by Henning von Cierke's designs, he shows a truly Wagnerian command of scenographic effect. His *Lohengrin* is enacted in a world of miraculous conjured light and cloud, moon, mist, stars and snow. Lohengrin himself arrives and departs not in a boat but through the swirling funnel of a tornado - we are in the realm of weather rather than of miracles.

Herzog's view of the opera is not so much un-Christian as post-Christian: instead of the marshalled civil world of Elijah Moshinsky's powerful Covent Garden production, with its jostling religious emblems and public genuflections, he shows us Brabant reverting to a state of nature, hungry for belief, but shelterless and disillusioned. He reads the legendary tenth century in terms of our own. His triumph is to convey this bleakness not through the routine anachronism of modern Wagner stagings but through a return to German Romantic art itself. The outer acts are portentous historical canvases set in the depths of winter - the people of Brabant assemble on the ice of the frozen Scheide under an ominous sun. In the second act the splendour of ancient Antwerp is shown already in picturesque ruin, the Minster left now only a portal standing amid fallen

masonry. The imagery is redolent of the symbolic early landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich, the Gothic dereliction telling of the old religion and sustaining, when Elsa sings of her future happiness, a dream of its own restoration, as Herzog projects the arches of the unviolated cathedral in a glimmering vision among the stars.

By conveying his modern disaffection in the scenic conventions of nineteenth-century painting Herzog is able to preserve the singular mood of the *Lohengrin* world intact. There is no attempt to lend gratuitous animation to the ensemble scenes, which are either static or professionally slow, built out of formal pronouncements, recitation and choral response, their structural tensions those of ritual and the disruption of ritual. Herzog draws out to the full the radiance and aspiration of the procession to the Minster and the gathering of the troops in the outer acts. He respects the ceremonial *allégresse* celebrated by Proust - "cette sorte de tendresse, de sérieuse douceur dans la pompe et dans la joie qui caractérisent certaines pages de *Lohengrin*, certaines peintures de Carpaccio". There is a vein throughout all Wagner's mature work of such tender pomp, of luminous formality and generous reticence, the music of welcome and *Gastfreundschaft*. It is all the more beautiful here for the threatening bleakness of the surroundings in which it is cast.

In the third act Herzog's deviations from Wagner become more prominent. The bridal chamber does not exist; instead Elsa and Lohengrin are brought together in a kind of tundra, flung by distant icy mountains under starlight. The marriage-bed is like an ice-sculpture or a table-tomb, surrounded by a silver swan. It is a piece of Ludwigian kitsch, a surreal Daliesque object set down in a long Arctic night. Yet it is a telling setting for a union which is founded on a dream and can never be consummated by real human beings. The desolation is intensified in the final scene, enacted beneath a catastrophic sky; as Lohengrin lifts the encumbering swan's wings from Gottfried he reveals him as an ungainly, long-legged little boy, who is left shivering and alone as snow begins to fall and Elsa, far from passing away according to Romantic opera convention, draws warily near to the unbowed Ortrud in some final (if enigmatic) submission. The transcendent opportunity has passed, the cur-

Nature-lovers

Alan Jenkins

Jean de Florette
Curzon Cinema, Mayfair

The eponymous nature-lover, a gentle, bear-like *bossu*, the inheritor of a Provençal home-stead and some dangerous *idées reçues* about unaccommodated man, brings his childishly devoted wife and their uncanny daughter out of "l'enfer des villes" to seek freedom, tranquillity and "l'authentique" in the sun-stunned hills; they will breed rabbits, and live a self-sufficient idyll. Unknown to them, the land they hope to turn to these admirable purposes has already been claimed, in imagination at least, in support of other plans: those of young, simple-minded Ugolin, the only surviving descendant of local farmers, and his wily, prosperous uncle, to produce lucrative acres of carnations. (Behind this lies the remoter dream of marriage, an heir, continuing the line.) They have already done away with the previous occupant and to ensure success they stop up and cement a spring on Jean's land - without water his hopes and his crops will fail, they will buy up his farm and divert the supply.

It does not, of course, happen quite like that. The clash of two dreams, of two tenacious though contrasting wills and temperaments, provides a drama - in tone mostly a comedy, but tragic in its outcome - of close-grained local proportions, larger and more complex import. Gérard Depardieu is an extremely impressive Jean, a holy fool, an educated innocent of touching and vulnerable aspect; he is more than matched by Daniel Auteuil as the pained, ignorant *paysan* who befriends and (by declining to advise him of his errors) helps to destroy him. What impulsive fantasy, positivist faith and determination begin, the punishing heat and drought of a Provençal summer accomplish; water, on which questions of life and death, survival and defeat, pride and humiliation all turn, has never seemed so precious. (A storm passing some way off reduces Jean to rage at the emptiness of the heavens.)

Jean is set up to fail, but we share the agony of his every reversal all the same; and there are other, more subtle reversals. He comes to the country with printed manuals and quotations from Rousseau, but this townie sophistication is no shield against the climate or the superior survival-knowledge of the crafty peasants (Yves Montand as the uncle is eloquent with it). The latter are portrayed as grasping and ruthless in pursuit of their aims, but not (not Ugolin, anyway, or not entirely) unfeeling. Moral boundaries are blurred. As one of the village gossips remarks, "They do what they like, we do what we like, and the less said the better" - in the country this, the film suggests, is the only truth, as goods and chattels wield the only power. Presuppositions about value are challenged or nudged delicately into irrelevance. At moments Claude Berri's direction slides into delighted complicity with the chuckles and thigh-slapping of Ugolin and his uncle at the grandiosity of Jean's projects, the woeful inadequacy of his provisions; the next moment, Jean's misfortunes, the torments of an unkind Providence and the callousness of his fellow-men make him a kind of Job (Depardieu's massive dignity and pathos to the fore here).

Between Ugolin and Jean are subtleties of contrast and identity, symmetry and divergence, envy and sympathy, trust and suspicion, worthy of James Hogg. In other respects the film, like the Marcel Pagnol novel it is unusually faithful to, is firmly in a line of robust rural realism: exacting and well-warded attention to the details of its mid-1920s setting, to texture, mood and local speech (though its musical coarseness and malicious wit are not well served by the subtleties). Each scene is lovingly photographed, immaculately directed; the acting of large and minor roles is flawless, and the whole moves towards its desolate climax (the apparent triumph of "inhuman" greed, but hints of a sequel and the daughter Manon's revenge to come) with the rich, fluent, suspenseful inevitability of the films they don't, we're always told, make them like any indie.

Talking it through

Martha Nussbaum

MICHAEL C. STOKES
Plato's Socratic Conversations: Drama and Dialectic in Three Dialogues
 520pp. Athlone. £20.
 0-485-11295-7
 CHARLES L. GRISWOLD, JR.
Self-Knowledge in Plato's "Phaedrus"
 315pp. Yale University Press. £28.50.
 0-300-03594-2
 PLATO
Phaedrus
 Translated by C. J. Rowe
 224pp. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.
 Paperback, £8.25.
 0-85668-313-2

Plato, Olympiodorus records, once dreamed that he had turned into a swan and was flying from tree to tree, evading the most persistent efforts of those who tried to shoot him down. The story shows that already in antiquity Plato's thought was felt to be unusually difficult to pin down – and difficult on account of some of the very features that have made it unusually fascinating: its concern with high and important issues, the special grace and beauty of its literary expression. Centuries of interpretation have shown us many Platos: the dogmatic teacher of a philosophical system; the sceptical dialectician, who probes without asserting; the tough-minded analyst, dedicated to rigorous logic and accurate definition; the literary artist, who pursues beauty of expression above perspicuous statement; and others, no doubt, as well. Each of these pictures contains some truth. (As Aristotle says in another context, "Some of these things have been said by many people over a long period of time, others by a few distinguished people; it is reasonable to suppose that none of them has missed the target totally, but each has got something, or even a lot of things, right.") The challenge of Plato interpretation is to combine what is accurate in these different approaches and to produce a picture of Plato that does full justice to a reader's sense of his philosophical power and his deep originality. This requires, however, much difficult philosophical self-examination: for if the goal is to capture Plato, it is dangerous to assume a conception of philosophical excellence that comes from the interpreter's own philosophical culture and to search in Plato for signs of that excellence.

In recent years, in England and the United States especially, the emphasis has been on Plato's arguments, and on his excellence as a close and careful reasoner about central issues in metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. Reacting against an era of scholarship in which, as Gilbert Ryle once observed, the *Republic* was often treated like the Bible (and came to look, said Ryle, as if it had just about that much philosophical argument in it), interpreters stressed the need for close attention to logical structure, discovering tacit premisses and in general mapping Plato's arguments in a lucid and perspicuous way. This recovery of the element in human discourse to which Plato is most deeply and explicitly committed raised Plato scholarship to a high level of philosophical rigour and led to a deepened understanding of many of his positions.

But there were omissions. Analytic interpreters, eager to make Plato emerge as philosophically respectable according to their own standards of respectability, found Plato's use of the dialogue form, of characters, of myth and literary language, to be an embarrassment. Brought up on the Lockean dogma that the literary use of language is always a vice in argument aimed at truth, they kept silent about Plato's indiscretions and got on with the business of analysing the portions of his text that most obviously lent themselves to analysis. This prevented them from asking how the choice of literary form and style can express a philosophical position, how form and statement are united. Connected to this was a tendency to ignore the dialectical and interrogatory character of many passages, finding assertions where Socrates asks questions, ascribing to Plato (or at least to Socrates) premisses that are actually offered by Socrates to an interlocutor. This procedure made the dialogues appear clearer in statement and more systematic than they had previously been seen

to be – but at the cost of suppressing their roots in the Socratic procedure of elenctic questioning, roots that caused major ancient thinkers to describe Plato as the first great philosophical sceptic. These neglected elements were, on the whole, mentioned only by commentators whose aim was literary appreciation and who cared relatively little about the arguments.

In recent years there are signs of a reaction. Not only writers from other philosophical traditions, but analytic interpreters themselves, are paying new attention to literary, rhetorical and mythic elements of Plato's writing and to the philosophical implications of the dialogue form. This has produced a new sensitivity to the dialectical structure of Plato's conversations. Without relaxing philosophical precision, interpreters are becoming more willing to recognize that his idea of precision may be more complicated than our own, and that no element of a Platonic dialogue is accidental or merely decorative.

The three books under review all pursue this corrective project. While determined to take the analysis of argument as their central task, they insist on looking at the arguments as Plato wrote them and asking why he wrote them in just that way. The most ambitious of the three, Michael C. Stokes's dense and detailed analysis of three dialogues, *Plato's Socratic Conversations*, proposes a strategy of interpretation that insists on the dialogues' essentially interrogatory character. (He mentions the Olympiodorus story to illustrate his own view of Plato's elusiveness.) Stokes argues that we are not entitled to ascribe a thesis to Socrates (far less to Plato) unless he unambiguously asserts it as his own belief – a very rare occurrence. For the most part, Stokes argues, Socrates is doing what he claims to be doing: cross-examining his interlocutor. He draws the materials of his own argument from the respondent's explicit admissions and from his own knowledge of the respondent's character, commitments and ways of life. What is shown by such a procedure is not, straightforwardly, that a certain thesis is true or false, but, rather, that a certain sort of person, with certain commitments, can be led, on pain of inconsistency, to assent to theses that at first seem alien to him. Sometimes, as it turns out, these are theses that Socrates also endorses in his own person. And the fact that interlocutors of many different types in different dialogues are driven by argument again and again to the same theses – for example, to the unity of the virtues and the sufficiency of knowledge for right action – gives the reader reason to think that Plato was well disposed to these theses, or at least considered them to be theses that had, more than others, withstood the severest rational critique.

This is a challenging thesis, ingeniously and closely argued. Like Stokes's Socrates, his book is a powerful elenctic device, capable of showing many an interpreter the inconsistencies of his or her ways. And all current interpreters should subject themselves to its irritating questioning. The applications of the general thesis to three dialogues produce mixed results – strongest, as one might expect, where Plato appears closest to the critical activity of the historical Socrates, weaker in cases in which Plato's Socrates develops what history (from Aristotle on) has usually taken to be distinctively Platonic doctrines. Thus the chapter on the *Laches* is fascinating and highly successful. With painstaking attention to ambiguities in the Greek conception of *andreia* (which includes elements of military expertise, courage and sheer toughness), and through analysis of the interlocutors' inconsistencies about the nature of the virtues, Stokes produces an account that makes Socrates' refutation both purely negative and of serious philosophical significance.

The lengthy chapter on the *Protagoras* is less successful. Here again, there is much excellent material, especially on the unity of the virtues. Stokes's close analysis of Protagoras' speeches shows better than any previous account the nature and extent of his confusion about the parts of virtue. But in his analysis of the pivotal argument about weakness of will, the problems with Stokes's austere approach begin to be felt. For we are left with a Socrates who confidently asserts the famous conclusion that knowledge of the good is sufficient for correct action, without holding any of the premisses in the argu-

ment that has established that conclusion, and without giving us any hint about how he himself would go about proving it, or about how he would deal with the problem of *akrasia*. This is surely too high a price to pay.

Least satisfactory is the account of the *Symposium*. Stokes holds, oddly, that the entire discourse of Socrates/Diotima is designed as an *elenchos* of Agathon alone, and that it refutes, *ad hominem*, certain propositions to which Agathon is committed as "a poet" and "a homosexual". There are at least four difficulties in this approach. First, Stokes gives us no reason to ignore the other interlocutors, or to think their views and commitments irrelevant to Diotima's theories. Second, he does not do justice to the literary form of Diotima's speech, which is certainly not questioning and elenctic throughout. Third, Stokes is unfortunately vague both about Greek poetry and about Greek sexual customs. He speaks as if Greek homosexuality were more or less the same thing as the contemporary analogue. He infers that a person "of strong and well-known homosexual disposition" will not marry – an inference unwarranted in any era, but especially so in the Greek world, where we have reason, furthermore, to doubt that the concept of a "homosexual disposition" existed in anything like its present-day form. As for poetry, Stokes suggests most implausibly that Agathon becomes a surrogate for Plato's own self-examination as a poet, not really recognizing that Agathon is an urbane lightweight, Plato a genius. (And what about Aristophanes? Does the view of that really great poet get "refuted" by the same Socratic argument?) Finally, Stokes does not seem to notice that two crucial steps in Diotima's argument are ones that a poet and a lover should be particularly unwilling to accept. For Diotima's argument requires us to accept that the object of love is beauty rather than a person who is beautiful, and, furthermore, that this beauty is "one and the same" in all beautiful bodies, and, indeed, ultimately part of a "wide sea" of beauty that includes spiritual and intellectual beauties as well. A person who has loved one other human being for a long time (Stokes stresses this feature of Agathon's biography) should not accept this. (The poet Aristophanes does not applaud at the end of Diotima's speech; his own speech has insisted that love is a finding of one's own unique "other half".) In this case, then, Stokes has not applied his own strategy well; and it remains to be seen whether his approach can yield satisfactory results in interpreting dialogues usually taken to belong to Plato's "middle period".

The *Phaedrus* is a dialogue that, more than almost any other, demands a complex interpretative approach. Among its themes is the nature of persuasive speech and writing; and nowhere does Plato's own speech exhibit greater artfulness. Socrates tells us that an erotic response to perceptible beauty plays a crucial role in the soul's aspiration to truth and good life; and Plato's writing expresses this insight, stirring the reader to reflection through its own complex beauty. A passage that Socrates calls a "demonstration" includes stretches of close analytic argument, interwoven with myth and with a moving narrative of erotic love. Moral content and literary form seem inseparable; both content and form make us ask hard questions about what rationality is and how it moves towards the truth.

Charles L. Griswold, Jr., grapples with these questions well, in *Self-Knowledge in Plato's "Phaedrus"*, and comes up with some illuminating answers. Determined to take every part of the dialogue seriously as a single deliberate philosophical design, he analyses each episode in turn, with subtlety and much sensitivity. He argues that the central concern of the *Phaedrus* is with self-knowledge and recollection of truth, and with rhetoric and dialectic as routes to uncovering the truth in one's own soul. The dialogue, he argues, shows us how and why a question about one's self and one's own life calls forth general philosophical inquiry; why this inquiry requires both myths and arguments; and why conventional forms of speech-making and writing are inadequate in the pursuit of oneself. This is largely convincing and well put, but it is inevitably among them that we find the famous criticism of writing at the end of the *Phaedrus*, connecting it with

Plato's own attempt to write in a way that does not inspire complacency or a false sense of one's own wisdom. He also describes well the balancing of a love of the individual and a dedication to the ideal in the dialogue's account of erotic love.

There are some striking weaknesses in the book as well. Sometimes Griswold's zeal for detail leads him to bizarre over-elaborateness, as when he infers from Socrates' modest statement that no human poet has ever given a worthy (*kat' axian*) description of the *transcendently* realm, the conclusion that Socrates has now promoted himself to the ranks of the "superhuman". This omits the words "worthy" (not mentioned in his paraphrase of the text); or else it assumes, without textual warrant, that Socrates thinks his own description fully worthy. Again, some passages demonstrate great unclarity about well-trodden philosophical territory (Griswold's claim that "the knowing/deliberating and *ousia*/utility distinctions sound a lot like our theory/practice and fact/value distinctions"; this is useless muddle). The accounts of Lysias' speech and Socrates' first speech are weak, as Griswold strains to establish, implausibly, that the "so-called opinion reaching out for the best", praised by Socrates, is actually a narrowly instrumental use of reason to satisfy bodily appetite. In other areas as well, the discussion of Plato's moral psychology lacks philosophical precision. Nor is Griswold's command of nuances of the Greek language all that it might be. But in all, this is a book well worth reading, and a commendable effort.

C. J. Rowe's volume in the Aris and Phillips series includes the Greek text of the *Phaedrus*, a facing-page English translation (literal, in the style of the series), an introduction and a short commentary. Like Griswold, Rowe believes that all elements of the dialogue are deliberately crafted parts of its philosophical content. The introduction has useful things to say about characters and structure; the commentary is particularly good on the significance of the setting and the opening scene, and also on the dialogue's use of myth. Rowe's sensitivity to nuances of language and style is impressive; and he offers a balanced assessment of Lysias' speech and Socrates' criticisms of it. The limitations of the volume are the limitations of the series: it is very thin on some central issues, such as the "method of division", and its relationship to the conception of dialectic in *Phaedo* and *Republic*. On no central issue does the commentary have the opportunity to explore philosophical problems in very great depth. Rowe has recently been writing a series of challenging papers on the *Phaedrus*; on its unity (*Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 1986), on its rehabilitation of rhetoric and on its conception of madness (three forthcoming papers). Let us hope that he will work these into a longer commentary, or republish them together with this one.

Each generation tends to think, perhaps foolishly, that it is capturing the Platonic spirit at last. And it certainly seems that by combining the rigorous analysis of argument with a serious respect for the elements in Plato's writing that are less familiar in our Anglo-American philosophical tradition, we are doing better than interpreters who have concentrated on one side to the neglect of the other. But it is a difficult balance to find, as these courageous and imperfect books show; the winged soul of that stranger of philosophers still flies above us.

Those who buy Tom Griffith's translation of the *Symposium* of Plato (223pp. Libani Press, Rose Tree House, Silverleaf Street, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 1JQ. Limited edition 355 copies, £78. 0-948021-06-3), will be doing so more for its elegant production, with engravings by Peter Forster, than as a guide to the Greek – which, in a pleasant footnote, is presented facing the English. Griffith expresses anxiety about the "revelation" notorious for his prodigious erudition and "deadly pedantry". I can lay claim only to the second, but found little at which to cavil, while enjoying the high standard of readability. A. E. Housman called bibliophiles "an idle class", but it is inevitably among them that Griffith's readers will be found; and they will perhaps be more captivated than I was by the illustrations. J. R. C. L.

Sizing up George

A. W. Moore

PHILIP PETTIT and JOHN McDOWELL (Editors)
Subject, Thought, and Context
 300pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25
 (paperback, £12.50).
 0-19-824944-6

How are our minds related to the world? All the essays in this collection are concerned with some aspect of this question. They touch on issues which lie at the very roots of philosophy, and anyone with a concern for these issues will find the collection challenging and stimulating.

A natural starting-point is the idea of a divide between *subject* and *context*, between that which has a mind and the rest of the world. How do thoughts – states of the mind – bridge this divide? For example, suppose that George sees a clock and thinks to himself that it has stopped. How does this thought relate him to the clock?

One very attractive view is this. It would have been all the same to George if an identical-looking clock had been there instead, or if there had been no clock at all and he had been hallucinating; so there is an aspect of George's state of mind, determining how things are from his point of view and perhaps causally explaining how he reacts to the situation, which is logically independent of the clock, and indeed of anything else in his context. To explain how his thought relates him to the clock is to tell a story about how the clock bears on this purely internal, or "narrow", aspect of his mind – say causally.

Let us call a suitably generalized version of this view "narrow-mindedness". Much of this collection is concerned with putting pressure on narrow-mindedness. One way of doing so is to challenge the original divide. Where exactly does George stop and his context begin? Or, if you like, how big is George? This question is both more urgent and less straightforward than it seems. If we are going to maintain, with any degree of interest, that certain aspects of George's mind are independent of his context, then there must be a principled way of specifying exactly what is, and what is not, part of his context.

We have relevant intuitions, of course. Some of these, broadly ethical in character and based on a native biology, concern the harm which would be done by various abdications. You can take George's shirt off, or even cut his

hair off, without inflicting much damage on him. Cutting his thumbs off is more drastic. Cutting his head off (or, as some would have it, cutting his torso and limbs off) is fatal. What is significant about these intuitions is the distinctive way in which the kind and degree of harm seem to change at a certain point. This supports the common-sense idea that George is 1.75m tall and weighs 140lb.

But there are conflicting, physiologically informed intuitions of a more philosophical character. According to these, what counts is the most that would have to remain the same for things still to be the same from George's point of view. A variety of phenomena, such as "phantom limb" cases where subjects whose limbs have been amputated still feel as if they were there, suggest that the most is not much: it could be all the same to George if a lot of the 140lb did not actually exist. He begins to seem much smaller (perhaps 7cm high, weighing 3lb – sort of greyish – or, in the extreme, a Cartesian ego with no extension or weight at all). By contrast, if we take his own experiences at face value, he seems bigger. When he writes with a pen he can feel the paper with it. Sometimes he feels the suffering of those he loves. Concerns of this kind are implicit in much of Jennifer Hornsby's excellent essay. Among other things she pin-points various obstacles to reconciling these intuitions in a way that supports narrow-mindedness. David Wiggins's essay also seems pertinent here. He argues that we can single something out without "making absolutely everything definite about the frontier between that thing and that which is not that thing". George, for example?

Of course, our difficulties in specifying principles of demarcation may simply reflect the fact that our ordinary concept of a subject is not the concept of an isolable substance. Trying to determine where George stops may be like trying to determine where Tuesday's weather stops. (Does it extend to the clouds? To the sun which they are partially obscuring? When it starts to rain, what starts to rain?) Still, it might be protested, one can give philosophical reasons for regimenting our concept in a certain way. Consider all the rivers of causation in which George is involved as an agent. Certain a priori principles of understanding concerning, say, action at a distance, together with some straightforward empirical knowledge, point to his brain as the smallest chunk of the world through which they all flow; and this encourages the idea that there will always be, underpinning our ordinary psychological

explanations of George's behaviour, causal explanations of his brain's behaviour. So why not – at least for philosophical purposes – identify George with his brain?

One problem is that it may place too much strain on the notion of behaviour which it exploits, as argued by Hornsby: it may also be so at odds with our ordinary view of things as to call into question the scientific paradigms that sustain it, as argued by Philip Pettit and Gregory McCulloch and again by Hornsby. But a more basic concern is this: even given such a divide between George and what is not George, could his own intrinsic states determine how things are from his point of view in the way required by narrow-mindedness?

Many of the contributors argue that they could not, because, in a variety of fundamental cases, every aspect of his mind already extends to, or depends upon, his context. They appeal to the very nature of our mental concepts and the uses to which we put them (see the introduction and the essays by Pettit, McCulloch, Hornsby, John McDowell, Tyler Burge and Christopher Peacocke). A dominant idea is that we use these concepts not just to explain George's behaviour as a cog in some complex machine but to understand how he understands and copes with his environment. No aspect of this, not even how things are from his point of view, makes sense if the context is "bracketed". In particular, it is argued, much of it fails to make sense if we "bracket" other subjects.

The importance of other subjects – the community – and, more particularly, how Wittgenstein's work bears on it, are taken up in the essays by Crispin Wright and Jonathan Lear. Wright breathes some new life into an old problem: is there, in sections 258–60 of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, a cog argument against private language? I confess I have trouble with his exegesis. Also, one of his central concerns is to rebut a certain defence of private language which, he complains, makes private language possible only in "very special, at best unlikely circumstances"; but this invites the response, "Yes – and it is only because the world is a very special, at best unlikely place that there is even public language." Still, Wright's essay is characteristically probing.

Lear's concern is very Kantian. It is nothing less than how philosophy of a Wittgensteinian kind is possible – how, by reflecting on our own (communal) activities, we can attain non-empirical insight into them. One of his main

aims, in an essay of great depth and penetration, is to argue that Wittgenstein's own work, testimony to the possibility of such philosophy, is nevertheless incomplete in not addressing this question – not offering a critique of itself. I believe that this incompleteness is irremediable. We can take a leaf out of Wittgenstein's earlier book, as Lear himself suggests elsewhere, and accept that some things simply cannot be put into words (despite Lear's efforts towards the end of the essay). When we try to put them into words – when we try to give a critique of Wittgenstein's (later) philosophy – we find ourselves saddled with the kinds of anomalies and contradictions which beset Wittgenstein himself when he tried to give a critique of his own earlier philosophy; or at least, relatedly, we find ourselves confronting the kind of idealism which is integral to Kant but would have been an anathema to Wittgenstein.

The main focus here, as in the rest of the collection, is subjectivity, seen in this case under a communal aspect. What Lear explores is what many of the other writers engage in, an attempt to understand subjectivity from a non-external standpoint. But none of the writers suggests that taking a first-person view of subjectivity and taking a third-person view are exclusive – nor, perhaps, exhaustive. I detect an emphasis on the second person. Think how the subject can be encountered and addressed, how we all share more or less the same context. Think about that most crucial of concepts in both the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language, drawing another subject's attention to something. Little of this makes sense unless the compass of the mind extends to the context – something that gives a curiously literal twist to the idea of a meeting of minds.

Of all the essays in the volume it is in McDowell's that we find the subtlest account of subjectivity, and the most penetrating attack on narrow-mindedness. Narrow-mindedness can be seen as Leibnizian. It represents the subject as a windowless monad whose point of view depends on its own intrinsic features. By arguing, beautifully, that a point of view cannot be understood except as a point of view on the world, McDowell enables us to recognize the subject's *finitude*. His writing is very abstract – sole relief comes from two or three cursory references to a cat – and steeped in metaphor. But it repays the effort of trying to master it. There is, in this essay, a touch of genius.

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Apportioning responsibility

John Martin Fischer

GALEN STRAWSON
Freedom and Belief
339pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £27.50.
0 1982 4938 1

P. F. Strawson has argued convincingly that to hold a person morally responsible for his behaviour is to be inclined to take certain "reactive attitudes" towards him. These attitudes include indignation, resentment, hatred, gratitude, respect and love. Further, in cases of moral responsibility we may be disposed to engage in special activities such as moral praise, blame, reward and punishment. To have these attitudes and engage in these activities constitutes holding oneself and others morally responsible.

One of our central concerns, in thinking about moral responsibility, is to give an account of the circumstances in which the reactive attitudes are appropriate and to ascertain whether they actually obtain. One of the conditions that many philosophers think antithetical to the reactive attitudes is causal determinism, or (roughly) the doctrine that everything that happens is causally necessitated by the past, together with the natural laws. Certain philosophers have argued that causal determinism is incompatible with moral responsibility (and thus with the appropriate application of the reactive attitudes). They are not necessarily asserting that causal determinism obtains; rather, that if causal determinism did obtain, then the reactive attitudes would be inappropriate.

Other philosophers have argued that the reactive attitudes are compatible with causal determinism. In other words, that, even if we discovered some day a complete, true theory of the universe (and that causal determinism is true), the reactive attitudes would still be appropriate in certain circumstances. Compatibilists claim that not all causally deterministic sequences are relevantly similar and that the causal sequences we intuitively deem to be incompatible with the reactive attitudes are special and unusual. We intuitively think that sequences involving, for example, psychological illness, hypnosis, potent drugs, etc., would rule out moral responsibility.

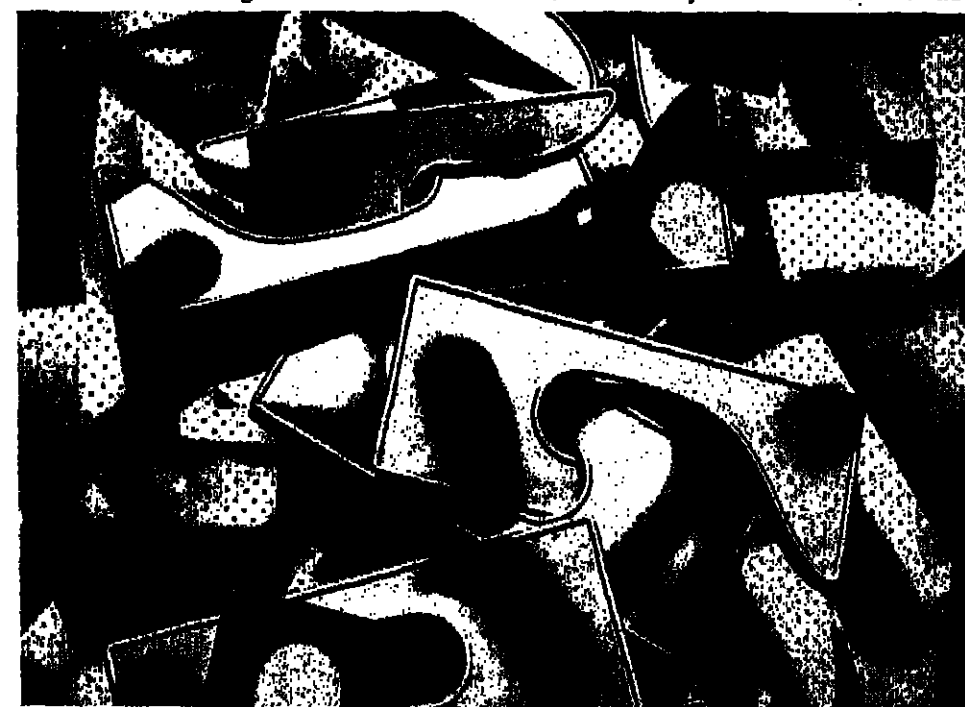
In his rich and subtle book, *Freedom and Belief*, Galen Strawson makes a distinctive contribution to this philosophical debate. First, he argues against the two main theses of his father, P. F. Strawson, that (i) causal determinism in itself does not rule out the appropriateness of the reactive attitudes, and (ii) human lives without the reactive attitudes are practically inconceivable. Although thesis (i) is comforting, Galen Strawson points out that there are elements of our common understanding of moral responsibility which seem to imply that if an act is causally determined, then the agent cannot legitimately be held morally responsible for it. Appeal to our common intuitions about moral responsibility cannot yield the comforting thesis. His argument against thesis (ii) is particularly intriguing. He points out that someone who believes that the reactive attitudes are inappropriate can find an alternative to them in a certain sort of meditation similar to that of Buddhist monks who undertake to disabuse themselves of the (to them) delusory belief in a persisting self. Thus, according to Galen Strawson, the reactive attitudes may not be a necessary feature of a coherent human life; there is a coherent form of life available even to someone who believes both that causal determinism is true and that it is incompatible with the appropriateness of the reactive attitudes. Thus, as against his father, he suggests that there is no practical necessity to accept the reactive attitudes or a kind of compatibilism.

His second distinctive contribution has to do with the conditions thought to be necessary for "true moral responsibility". Most philosophers have argued that in order for the reactive attitudes to be legitimately applied to an agent, that agent must be free, where this freedom can be specified in terms of a set of capacities of a certain sort. Such capacities typically include those that underlie the capacity for purposive action – the capacity to have desires and beliefs, the capacity to reason practically and the

capacity for self-movement or at least self-change – and the capacity for self-conscious thought. In contrast, an "attitudinal theory" requires (perhaps in addition to certain capacities) that the agent *experience* the world in a certain way, "that one have certain attitudes, whether cognitive or non-cognitive, to the way things are – to the world, or to oneself". Galen Strawson argues that capacity theories of freedom and moral responsibility are inadequate. They leave out what he takes to be an important condition of freedom (and responsibility): the belief of the agent that he is free (and responsible).

The author's theory of freedom and moral responsibility is, in his terms, "subjective", whereas the capacity theory is "objective". The subjectivists hold (and the objectivists deny) that believing one is a free agent (and thus morally responsible) is a necessary condition of actually being a free agent (and thus morally responsible).

Most philosophers have been objectivists, they have thought that whether an agent is free is a different issue from whether he believes that he is free. Strawson's subjective approach is unusual, and his arguments for it are interesting. He notes that his theory contravenes a very attractive general principle: that of independence. According to this, our having a belief cannot be a necessary condition of that same belief's truth. Suppose, for example, that I believe that the Golden Gate Bridge is in San Francisco. Whether this belief is true does not in any way depend on whether I have it: that the Golden Gate Bridge is in San Francisco is



A detail from "Devil's Staircase or Aberrant Nucleotide Sequence" (1983), one of the 172 illustrations included in *Talisman*, a collection of photographs by Robert Rauschenberg, edited by Marco Livingstone (156pp. Thames and Hudson. £14.95. 0 500 34120 5).

Beyond understanding

Michael Rosen

STEPHEN HOULGATE
Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics
300pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.
0 521 32253 3

Contrary to common belief, Stephen Houlgate maintains, Hegel is best approached not as a metaphysician but as a critic of metaphysics – a more penetrating and persuasive one, indeed, than even the professed anti-metaphysician Nietzsche. His claim is less startling than it may at first appear, however: it is a rare metaphysician who does not at some stage castigate the "illusions of metaphysics" (meaning, of course, the systems of his predecessors). So often have the boundaries of metaphysics been redrawn that it is small trouble for any philosopher who feels uncomfortable with the label to find a definition which places his own enterprise outside its borders. Although Hegel is one of the few post-Kantian philosophers who do not distance themselves from the term ("Logic therefore coincides with metaphysics, the science of things as they are in themselves," he writes in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*), this is, Houlgate believes,

an objective fact.

Now it has seemed to most philosophers that whether an agent is free is similarly an objective fact. But Strawson argues that the only adequate account of our concept of freedom is implicitly subjective, and he considers various objections to this conclusion. He suggests that we might here have a respect in which our intuitive concept of freedom is incoherent: it is implicitly subjective and thus in violation of the principle of independence, and yet we cannot explain why the principle should be violated in the case of freedom.

The third distinctive contribution of *Freedom and Belief* consists in another departure from traditional ways of thinking about the conditions appropriate to freedom and responsibility. Many philosophers believe that it may be a necessary condition of our being morally responsible that causal determinism does not obtain. But Strawson argues that there is a "deeper" problem for moral responsibility, which arises whether or not causal determinism obtains, and thus, that some of the traditional focus on causal determinism (or its absence) might be misplaced, and that we ought to attend directly to the more basic problem of "self-determination".

He argues that it is part of our ordinary conception of moral responsibility that true responsibility for our actions requires "true self-determination", but he goes on to argue that our ordinary notions of freedom and moral responsibility presuppose something – true self-determination – that is impossible; thus, our ordinary notions of freedom and

moral responsibility are alleged to be incoherent. If he is right, there is a problem here for moral responsibility, since the requirement of self-determination arises prior to the problem of causal determinism.

Suppose I pull the trigger of my pistol and thereby shoot someone. Surely, if I am morally responsible for the shooting, I must be morally responsible for my choosing to pull the trigger. But in order to be morally responsible for my choice, I must be morally responsible for the practical deliberations that issued in the choice. But in order to be morally responsible for the deliberations, I must be morally responsible for the formation of the values that served as "inputs" into my deliberations. And such reasoning can be extended until we reach the conclusion that my moral responsibility for pulling the trigger requires that I be morally responsible for something (or some set of things) – perhaps the early life-experiences that formed my moral character – for the obtaining of which I manifestly am not morally responsible. Thus, Strawson's argument is that our common-sense notion of moral responsibility is incoherent, and requires an impossible kind of self-determination.

I do not think his argument is convincing. It seems to me that we require some sort of self-determination in order to be free and morally responsible, but not the sort that involves literal self-creation. We are obviously finite creatures who come into existence at particular points in time. Evidently, we are content to allow for the possibility of moral responsibility for our actions, even though we are manifestly not the "ultimate" creators of ourselves or of certain very basic features of ourselves. We intuitively allow for a certain kind of "moral luck", that is, we allow that we might be morally responsible for at least some of our actions, even though we recognize that we are not causally or morally responsible for some of the conditions of that responsibility. I am not responsible for my birth, my early family experiences, my lack of serious brain lesions, and so forth; ultimately, I am not causally or morally responsible for the conditions in virtue of satisfying which I am morally responsible. This seems to be part of common sense. To demand more is incoherent, but I do not think that it is part of our ordinary understanding of ourselves. It is, rather, a bizarre form of metaphysical megalomania.

Galen Strawson's book is large, intricately argued and challenging, full of subtle argumentation and intriguing examples. In a nutshell, he investigates the conditions necessary for the legitimacy of certain extremely important human attitudes and activities – attitudes bound up with human friendship, love and respect, and activities as basic as reward and punishment. And his conclusions are often novel and challenging to philosophical (and non-philosophical) orthodoxy.

more a source of prejudice against Hegel's work than a help in understanding it.

The problem with Houlgate's approach is the extent to which Hegel's criticisms of metaphysics are anchored within the wider framework of his own speculative system. Houlgate is not one of those who attempt to separate these two aspects of Hegel's philosophy; indeed, he emphasizes (rightly, in my view) their interdependence. Yet the more he reveals the interweaving of affirmative and critical elements within Hegelianism the less substance there remains to the comparison with Nietzsche.

That both authors reject the rigid categorical apparatus of Kantian idealism as well as the mechanistic materialism of the eighteenth century is familiar. But whether the consequence of this should be to lead onwards to a higher form of systematic philosophy depends on how one rates Hegel's claims to have identified a species of conceptual rationality beyond the fixed oppositions and finite limitations of the "understanding" – a question to which the study of Nietzsche hardly contributes. While Houlgate outlines this issue from Hegel's point of view clearly enough, the space given to it is not sufficient for a really convincing case to be made out in Hegel's defence.

The unequal division of Houlgate's sym-

pathies is most apparent in his assessment of Nietzsche as a critic of Hegel. Admittedly, Nietzsche's direct pronouncements on Hegel are frequently derivative (and, to the extent that that derivation comes via Schopenhauer, outrageously prejudiced). Nor does Houlgate have difficulty in differentiating Hegel from some of Nietzsche's cruder stereotypes of the metaphysical thinker. But he goes nowhere near far enough in considering whether Nietzsche's characterization of metaphysics might none the less, suitably refined and adapted, contain the basis for a critique of Hegel. There is a case for arguing that many of Hegel's central notions – for example, the distinction between essence and appearance or the doctrine of the Idea as the rational structure of reality – are merely represent new versions of the traditional doctrines of metaphysics rather than radically distinct alternatives to them.

Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics is a scholarly and often philosophically perceptive work. Nevertheless, the diffuseness of its structure means that many of the issues raised in it do not receive the kind of sustained argument they require. One who had that Houlgate had had the courage of his convictions and simply concentrated on a few blooded defence of Hegel. Plainly, this is not his closest to his heart?

Finding a common ground

Peter Lamarque

VINCENT DESCOMBES
Objects of All Sorts: A philosophical grammar
Translated by Lorna-Scott Fox and Jeremy Harding
210pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.
0 631 15081 1

Vincent Descombes is an eloquent and authoritative emissary of *rapprochement* between the analytic and Continental camps in philosophy. His earlier book, *Modern French Philosophy*, offered salutary instruction to the analytic school on the diversity and richness of philosophical thought in France. His current book, first published in French in 1983, offers the Continental school an insight into the power and relevance of analytic methods as applied to recognizably "Continental" concerns.

Needless to say, Descombes is sceptical of any deep divide between the two schools. He opens with a thoughtful essay, specially written for the English edition, spelling out misconceptions on both sides. Judicious quotations from Wittgenstein reveal common ground as well as points of divergence. Descombes shows that it is not topics or even methods which decisively mark off the camps; it is more a matter of emphasis, the Anglo-Saxons tending towards "naturalism", the Continentals towards "his-

toricism". My own thought is that the division probably resides just as much in canonical authority. No die-hard Anglo-Saxon would support an argument by citing Gadamer or Derrida. No loyal Continental would give space to Carnap or Davidson. Each side simply has a different group of friends.

At the heart of traditional analytic philosophy lie two connected ideas: that the "logical structure" of a sentence might be at variance with its grammatical or syntactical structure, and that only the logical structure reveals the true nature of the correspondence between sentence and fact. The practical task is thus defined as logical analysis (that was the "linguistic turn"), the metaphysical programme, the pairing of bits of language with bits of the world (that was the philosophical pay-off). Russell's *Theory of Descriptions* epitomized these ideas. The two sentences "The author of *Waverley* was Scotch" and "Sir Walter Scott was Scotch" are syntactically similar, said Russell, but their logical structure is quite different; the expression "the author of *Waverley*" is not functioning, logically speaking, as a name. If no one wrote *Waverley* the former sentence might be false but it is not meaningless. On such apparently simple foundations analytic philosophy built its empire.

Whatever your philosophical interest, it is hard to avoid confronting such dichotomies as word and object, surface structure and logical structure. These are the staples of the analytic

school, and Descombes shows over and over again that you ignore the teachings of that school at your peril. He applies logical methods to devastating effect. Husserl and Derrida are exposed for confusions about meaning, the semiologist falls down on propositions and negation, Saussure gets caught out on general names, Benveniste is shown to be weak on the idea of reference, Lacan muddled in his talk of signifiers. The analytic philosopher might derive a glow of satisfaction from all this, but the tone of the book is neither complacent nor negative.

Descombes is a purist even by analytic standards, a staunch defender of what Quine calls "semantic ascent", the shift from talking about things to talking about talk about things. But this is not "ordinary language philosophy" with its sophisticated dissection of linguistic nuance. Descombes' topic is "objects of all sorts"; he is interested in ontology, the enquiry of what kinds of things there are. For those brought up on Heidegger his conclusions, like his methods, will seem austere. Thus he allows only a "grammatical" kind of ontological scope, ie, through logical analysis of sentences: "We wish to reduce manners of speaking about something to other manners of speaking about something."

His range of investigation is wide. He is concerned with objects of perception, of consciousness, of knowledge, of fiction. It is a received view that "consciousness is always

consciousness of something"; the philosophy of phenomenology is built on that. But what does it mean? What is the "something"? Descombes insists that different logical structures are involved. We must avoid the "fake ontology of intentionality". Take desire, for example, as a conscious state. Descombes argues, somewhat surprisingly, that the verb "desire" has a different logic from the verb "love", so that while I can love so-and-so (what is "nameable") I can only, strictly speaking, desire that such-and-such (what is "sayable").

In a delightful chapter on fictional objects Descombes poses the logical puzzles by asking how we might list the fictional characters in Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*. Do we include the unnamed characters, "a lady", "a young man"? Even among the named characters, should Napoleon appear, or is he just "borrowed", not "invented"? And what about Vautrin, who is a fiction within the fiction? Descombes ends with the intriguing, if undeveloped, idea that a character is a "mask".

In many ways the book is unmistakably "Continental", with its wide and synoptic scope, its concern with intellectual history, and its treatment of authors and theories outside the Anglo-Saxon agenda. Its analytic methods seem at times old-fashioned, reminiscent of debates from the 1930s. But only the most churlish Anglo-Saxon philosopher would fail to welcome this evangelism for the analytic movement.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the cognitive model-building went on last Tuesday. Tuesday's judgement was itself, perhaps, an act of modelling in terms of the concept of thinking. What is going on now, while I "introspect"? Surely, I am recalling a cognitive state. Interpreting my Tuesday state was a cognitive act, one which I now remember as an act of thinking. This case of introspecting needs no replay of past outer perceptions, since the memory is a purely intellectual one. Yet Lyons leaves no room for this.

Further worries crowd in. Lyons admits that subjects have privileged access to their replays. Since this kind of introspection is genuine and non-eliminable, there is room for the question "How is such direct access possible?" The fact that we can voluntarily summon up one memory out of a vast set of memories demands a psychological as well as a physiological explanation. Some cognitivists postulate a division of labour: one part of the subconscious stores the dormant memories, a separate part searches through and selects. Such models may be wrong, but they cannot be shot down just on the grounds that "inner scanning" is a bad metaphor. On this level of "explaining how", functionally defined sub-units are just what we want. To propose that "the recalling and imaginative reconstruction is done by means of nothing more mysterious than perceptual memory and imagination" is vacuous.

PHILOSOPHIA Philosophical Quarterly of Israel Editor: Asa Kasher

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Editorial address: PHILOSOPHIA, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan 52100, or Prof. Asa Kasher, Department of Philosophy, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv 619978, Israel.

(0724)

Ramon Llull, the great Majorcan polymath, owes his influence from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century to his "Art". This was a formidable system the purpose of which was to order the whole of knowledge and, ultimately, to demonstrate the incontrovertible truth of Christianity for the benefit of the Jews and the Muslims, to whose conversion Llull devoted so much of his energy. In his determination to master every possible subject, Llull (writing in Catalan, Latin and Arabic) produced works in numerous domains and in various genres, and many of them rank among the masterpieces of medieval literature.

Selected Works of Ramon Llull (1232-1316):

Alastair Hamilton

Paperback philosophy

In the first of a new series of reviews of paperbacks in particular subjects, Alan Ryan makes a selection of current paperback philosophy of interest to both specialist and general readers.

Little original philosophy appears in paperback on first publication, either uniquely in paperback or alongside a hardback edition; authors and publishers have very different views of the size of the market for philosophy books – and authors generally discover that their publishers are right about it. It also comes as a nasty shock to most authors to discover that books published in paperback alone stand little chance of a review. I have no figures to back up my hunch, but I suspect that Jonathan Glover's *Causing Death and Saving Lives* and J. L. Mackie's *Ethics* made less of a stir than they deserved when they were first published by Penguin in 1977 because they appeared only in paper.

Where it does make good sense to publish at once in paperback is in the overtly instructional market; over the past year, two rather useful series have begun to appear: Issues in Political Theory from Macmillan and Concepts in the Social Sciences from the Open University Press (both also available in hard covers). Many of the authors are old hands, with several similar texts behind them.

It is invidious to single out this selection of brief books as strikingly better than the rest; what is universally impressive is the amount of effort that has gone into covering the ground, reporting on it accurately and lucidly, and making some exceedingly complex ideas as accessible as possible. No doubt most of their readers will be students on courses of one sort and another; but it would be pleasant to think that that possibly mythical creature, the educated general reader, will venture a fiver or so on some of them.

DAVID McLELLAN. *Ideology*. 112pp. Open University Press. £4.95. 0 335 15380 1. David McLellan displays his familiar mastery of both the history of ideas and philosophical analysis. He recognizes the usefulness of the concept of ideology as well as its slipperiness, and he neither evades his critical duties by concentrating on the history of ideas nor baffles his readers by concentrating on the logical problems of the concept of ideology without providing enough context. He neatly distinguishes Marx's views from Engels's, discusses American political scientists' views on ideology in as much detail as Gramsci's account of hegemony, makes Habermas clear, interesting and criticizable, and insists throughout that if the cheerful naivety of "good, empirical social science versus bad, myth-mongering ideology" just won't do, it is essential to hang on to the critical implications of a concept whose place is in the analysis of power and how it is sustained.

ROBERT NISBET. *Conservatism*. 128pp. Open University Press. 0 335 15378 X. David McLellan is idiosyncratic but exceedingly good fun. Anyone familiar with Robert Nisbet's enormously influential history of sociology, *The Sociological Tradition* (1967), will guess that Edmund Burke features largely; and that conservatism is reckoned to start with the disconcerting impact of the French Revolution. Nisbet avoids shipwreck on that well-known shoal, the search for the "essence" of a creed which is hostile to creeds and essences; instead he stresses key elements in what he terms the "dogmatics" of conservatism – the stress on property, for example, with a particular emphasis on family property, or the emphasis on community rather than the individual. Perhaps wisely, he does not dwell on the difficulty of making an emphasis on the familial, allegiance-creating side of property compatible with an emphasis on *laissez-faire*. Burke somehow managed to defend both, so we must suppose that it is not an entirely incoherent view. British readers will – or ought to – enjoy Nisbet's final chapter, which is a lament for the way the American New Right has hijacked the "conservative" label. From 1950 to 1980, cultural conservatism was a steadily growing force in American life; Russell Kirk, Eric Voegelin, Leo Strauss, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Daniel Boorstin and Nisbet himself may not have had a great deal in common, but they were effective critics of the simpler sorts of liberalism, and they were serious, well read, sceptical of the

populism of American politics. In so far as one can pin any one allegiance on them, it was to Burke, Tocqueville and Acton; and they were aware of their kinship with Europeans like Raymond Aron and Englishmen like Michael Oakeshott. What came in with Reagan was not this urbane and fastidious conservatism; it was the moral authoritarianism of the New Right – shrill, censorious and populist. The result is not conservatism, but counter-revolution with most of the vices of the revolution. "There are no guillotines on Capitol Hill or the Mall in Washington, but there are punishments for the 'authentic' and rewards for the 'authentic'." Struggles for the mythical award of The Trust Conservative of the Month have increased in scope and intensity. Suspicions lie everywhere, just as they came to among the Jacobins.

JOHN GRAY. *Liberalism*. 112pp. Open University Press. £4.95. 0 335 15376 3. Liberalism is less unambiguously personal than Conservatism, but John Gray unhesitatingly runs his own line on liberalism's good and bad. Like Nisbet he adopts the easy but sensible path of providing an *histoire raisonnée* of his subject, taking the reader from the proto-liberalism of Periclean Athens to the Rawlsian and Nozickian revival of liberal theory in the 1970s. Unlike Nisbet, he then turns to the philosophical foundations of liberal theory; since his *Mill on Liberty: A defence* (1983), Gray has come to accept the critics' view that Mill's utilitarianism will not generate exactly those freedoms the liberal most wants. On Gray's present view, Mill needs, but does not have, a theory of the just allocation of restraints; there cannot be any guarantee that the restrictions on liberty that a utilitarian concern for harm-prevention would dictate are restrictions that justice would demand. The sceptic might think that if Gray devoted to the task of finding a utilitarian theory of justice half the ingenuity his book displays in generating a utilitarian theory of liberty, things might be less gloomy than Gray supposes. The truth seems, rather, that Gray now prefers the eighteenth-century Scots social theorists and their successors among Austrian economists and American social choice theorists.

Other paperbacks in brief

Cricket

SIR PELHAM WARNER. *Lord's: 1787-1945*. With an introduction by Roy Hattersley. 324pp. Pavilion Books. £5.95. 1 85145 112 9. It is apt that Sir Pelham Warner's history of Lord's should be available again in a handy form in this year, the 200th anniversary of MCC. Warner was a competent historian, by no means a common place among Test cricketers, and was at the forefront of cricketing activity, by which of course is also meant Lord's activity to which it was inextricably linked, from 1894 to 1951. He played for Rugby, Oxford, Middlesex (captain from 1908-1920), England (15 Tests, captain in ten of them). On retirement, he became successively a Test selector, joint manager of MCC to Australia in 1932-3 and President of MCC in 1950-51. Small undertones in Warner's narrative disturb the historically placid surface: his attitude to "walking" and his attempt to gloss over the bodyline controversy in which he was deeply and equivocally embroiled. In his introduction, of the misty-eyed class, Roy Hattersley claims he saw the stand erected in honour of Warner when he first visited Lord's in 1948. This sort of inexactitude – by a decade no less – finds no place in this precise survey.

History

WM. ROGER LOUIS. *Imperialism at Bay, 1941-1945: the United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire*. 611pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £15.00. 0 19 822972 0. This substantial and important book, which was first published in 1977, deals with Anglo-American wartime discussions concerning the post-war status of the mandated

MICHAEL LESSNOFF. *Social Contract*. 192pp. Macmillan. £6.95. 0 333 36791 X. This is two books for the price of one; the first ninety pages take us from the first glimmers of contractarianism in the writings of Manegold of Lautenbach around the year 1080 to the sophisticated hypothetical contractarianism of Kant, and the final seventy pages defend a "modest" contractarianism as it emerges in John Rawls's successive refinements of his theory of justice. Michael Lessnoff manages to pack a great deal into the book without ever departing from the highest standards of lucidity and rigour alike. The austerity of the style may daunt some beginners, but the book is full of good things. For instance, against David Gauthier's claim that contractarianism both presupposes and insulates "appropriate motivations" in the members of a society where contractarian ideology prevails, Lessnoff argues that the claim is implausible in itself, and is in any case an argument less against contractarian political theory than against the possibility of any sort of social relations between people who are helplessly addicted to exploiting one another for material gain. But, turning some pages later to James Buchanan's *Limits of Liberty* (1975), Lessnoff observes that Buchanan's view of human motivation looks very like the one Gauthier condemns, and that Gauthier's view that no society could be built on that framework is right in this case. But the most important suggestion in the book is the thought that social-contract theory needs to dispense with the "state of nature". Lessnoff makes the point with a crispness John Rawls has never managed to achieve. And once the point is put clearly, it is obviously right – since we have no reason to think the state of nature sacrosanct, why should we take it as a baseline? The objection leaves a work such as Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1975) in ruins, while leaving Rawls's original position intact. For, crucially, the state of nature may incorporate any number of deplorable features, while the original position of Rawls's theory is defined precisely to eliminate them.

RICHARD LINDLEY. *Autonomy*. 224pp. Macmillan. £6.95. 0 333 36793 6. Richard Lindley begins with a consideration of Hume, Kant and Mill, but only because they provide what he takes to be the most interesting, controversial and useful accounts of the subject-matter. It is, in fact, Mill who gets most attention, for

Kant's ultra-rationalism leaves too many autonomous choices out in the cold, and Hume's minimalist conception of autonomy leaves too little room for rational reflection and self-criticism. Mill is by no means always compelling, however. In particular, he cannot demonstrate that autonomy has the overwhelming value he says it has – nobody could demonstrate it, in Lindley's view, but Mill causes needless problems for himself by setting his sights too high; and Mill, like many others, resorts too readily to counterfactual claims about what wishes people would have if they were very different from how they are now. The point of insisting on the importance of current wishes without sacrificing everything to them is that it allows one to bring a concern for autonomy to the test of the real world. Lindley is unlike most philosophers, let alone the childless Hume, Kant and Mill, in taking seriously the thought that arguments based on the right of rational creatures to run their own lives would let in lots of children and shut out lots of adults. So he concludes that if, say, children demanded the vote, there is a serious case for letting them have it. Conversely, the education system is no great advertisement for an ambition to instil the desire for self-government in the young.

CHRISTOPHER BERRY. *Human Nature*. 176pp. Macmillan. £6.95. 0 333 37524 6. Christopher Berry remarks, somewhat plaintively, that "for a topic as broad as Human Nature and Politics there are surprisingly few books explicitly devoted to it". One might have thought that the broadness of the topic was exactly what explained most people's unwillingness to tackle it; after all, what topic in political theory could not shelter under the rubric? Berry's book reinforces that thought; it covers an enormous range of writers and issues – and very usefully, too. Inevitably, much of the book is structured around some familiar dichotomies: are we free or determined, rational or a-rational, political or apolitical? Is human nature the same at all times and places or essentially malleable by circumstances? Critics will quibble about some of Berry's claims about who belongs in which camp. He takes some dubious claims about James Mill's "privatized" conception of man too much for granted and sees less far into Rousseau's ambiguities than he ought. But as a map of a vast terrain, *Human Nature* is never less than useful and interesting.

which largely stems from prejudice or opposition to her politics. This edition is based on the Longman edition of 1934, but omits the original short preface by Constance's colleague and mentor, Edmond de Valera, which showed that though he was sympathetic to Constance, he recognized, even shared, the prejudices political women confronted. The new introduction is sometimes perceptive but is also confusing, often inaccurate and generally slapdash.

Natural history

C. F. LEVEL. *Herbal Delights*. 319pp. Faber. £4.95. 0 571 14850 6. *Elixirs of Life*. 221pp. Faber. £3.95. 0 571 14849 2. In these two reprints of Culpeper House Herbals of the 1930s C. F. Level provides a gallimaufry of fascinating plant lore, wisdom and learning. There are herbs for stupefying snakes, deterring drunkenness, fending off witchcraft, cures for nettle claret, marigold cheese and violet vinegar. The elixirs include the best gookeroo, gobernadora and kava-kava, which is chewed by young girls and boys before being made into an intoxicating drink; here too are aphrodisiacs, clairvoyance boosters, and cures for "all forms of eroticism". Obscure word derivations are given: plantagenet from *planta genista*, beech from *buche* because the first was used to write on. The introductions to each herb list all its known names, properties, actions, symbolic significance (rhubarb = advice; pineapple = perfection), minor aphorisms and edible parts. *Herbal Delights* was reviewed in the TLS of December 16, 1981.

Reviews by Timothy d'Arch Smith, M. Yapp, Anne Haverly and Deborah Singano

European issues

French History

L'Histoire
No 102, July-August 1987
£30. 57 rue de Seine, 75280 Paris.

L'Histoire is the most successful of the many French periodicals that are devoted to history. And it deserves to be. With impressive presentation and excellent illustrations it reaches a wide public; with articles written by the leading French historians (and often subsequently re-published in book form) it must also be classified as a learned journal. A special issue (No 96), in January of this year, surveyed a thousand years of the French nation ("La France et les Français 987-1987") and brought together such names as Contamine, Jacques le Goff, Le Roy Ladurie, Chauvin and René Rémond.

This special number (102) studies only sixteen years, the Gaullist years of the Fifth Republic which, as Jean-Noël Jeanneney explains in his preface, are considered to extend to 1974, rather than stopping with the General's resignation in 1969 or his death in 1970. 1974 marks the end of the Gaullist era, since the election of Giscard d'Estaing brought in a new political element and since the economic crisis of the 1970s was in obvious contrast to the prosperity and the expansion of the 1960s. But it is the socialist succession of the years 1981 to 1986, whereby the opponents of de Gaulle assumed his policies and his institutions, which suggests that the Gaullist heritage is something which is national and can therefore be considered with a new objectivity.

To put things in another way, it could be said that after the publication of three massive volumes of biography, the study of de Gaulle has entered its post-Lacouture phase (although Lacouture has contributed a short piece to this collection on the final months of the General at Colombey-les-deux-Églises, comparing them to Napoleon's exile on Saint Helena).

There are aspects of the initial years of the Fifth Republic which have been neglected, so great has been the post-1970 veneration and nostalgia for de Gaulle and the de Gaulle years, when an evidently great man was the leader of a nation which was acquiring *car en masse*, its first television sets, its first washing machines. Michel Winock points to the moment when the General had to face his first political election, as opposed to a referendum, in 1965, and received only 43.7 per cent of the votes cast. He suggests the existence of two

dialectics which de Gaulle was unable to escape: that between an apparently successful foreign policy and a domestic policy that aroused widespread hostility and resentment; that between a popular desire for change and liberation, as expressed by the students in May 1968, and an equally popular desire for security and comfort, as expressed by the electorate in June 1968. This is echoed by the idea put forward by Jean-Pierre Rioux in his perceptive article on the society of the period, "Vive la consommation", where the constant pleasures of consumerism are always balanced by the regular condemnation of its unacceptable wickedness.

Certain questions are asked about de Gaulle personally. Why, asks Guy Pervillé, in a severe article, did he betray the *harkis*, the Muslims who had fought with the French army? Who, asks Philippe Bauchard, was responsible for the campaign of personal vilification to which Georges Pompidou was subjected after his reluctant resignation as prime minister in 1968? To what extent, asks Samy Cohen, was de Gaulle's determination that France should be equipped with nuclear weapons a personal and instinctive conviction rather than a considered question of strategy? But the major articles are concerned with French society. Its prosperity is examined by Antoine Prost, its building programmes by François Chaslin, its revolutionaries by Patrick Rotman and Hervé Hamon, its striking miners by Hélène Coulonjou. Anthony Rowley gives the final touch of Sciences-Politiques influence to this number with a discussion of how the French relate to progress.

Although a special issue, this number is typical of *L'Histoire*: lively, informative, original and stimulating.

Douglas Johnson

French History

Volume 1, No 1, March 1987
£28 for Volume One. Journals Subscription,
Oxford University Press, Walton Street,
Oxford OX2 6DP.

Within fifteen months of its foundation, Britain's new flourishing Society for the Study of French History held its first, highly successful, annual conference and launched its journal, *French History*, published by the Oxford University Press. The excellence of the inaugural issue and the promised contents of the second have established it as an academic publication of distinction, and it is welcome news that,

although originally biannual, it will be a quarterly from 1988. A French language version, from Editions La Manufacture of Lyon, will appear shortly. This is only one sign of French support for the venture. The editorial board of the journal contains many distinguished French names, joining historians from Britain, Canada, America, Germany and Poland, and foreign contributors feature prominently, their articles duly translated, in the first volume.

In recent years, historians of France have been among the most inventive in their quest for new kinds of evidence, and the whole range of their enquiries falls within the declared scope of *French History*. Indeed, as the editorial explains, historically orientated articles from other disciplines, from art and music to social sciences, are eligible, as are those which compare France with other countries. In the first number of Volume One we find Carolingian units of measurement (Jean-Pierre Devroey), Mazarin's benefices (J. A. Bergin), the eighteenth-century climate (Christian Desplat), and the soldier during the 1914-18 war (David Englander). We learn here that the bread baked by the monks of Corbie in the ninth century differed little if at all from that wished for by the 1917 soldier as he contemplated his lonely camembert. A review article by Richard Bonney thoughtfully examines the "absolutism" controversy, and reviewers have been given sufficient space to produce extended critiques. Lastly there is a comprehensive list of recent works on French history. The second issue of Volume One, coming out next month, will discuss the impact of war on late medieval Normandy, the poor in early modern Paris, Louis XVI's fiscal officials, and the post-revolutionary police.

The editor, Richard Bonney, and the associate editors, William Doyle and Louis Bergeron, are to be congratulated for beginning this new enterprise so promisingly. They have achieved their stated aim that, while they acknowledge that a journal devoted to the history of one country is a recognition of increasing specialization by historians, all the contributions should be lively and comprehensible to the interested reader.

Roger Mettam

Hispania, the distinguished journal of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, Inc., is published four times a year; subscription details are obtainable from AATSP, Mississippi State University, PO Box 6349, Mississippi State, MS 39762-6349.

Italian Studies

Differentia: Review of Italian thought
No 1, Autumn 1986
\$15. Queens College, City University of New York, Flushing, New York.

As emerged from a recent conference at the Sorbonne, a surprisingly high number of journals devoted to Italian studies originate outside Italy. This new addition, *Differentia* (which evidently draws its title from Derrida), takes its place among the many produced in the United States. It is elegantly presented and has strong philosophical leanings. "Italian thought" in the subtitle refers both to the intellectual figures dominating the scene in Italy who are the subjects of the articles and to those (sometimes the same) who contribute to the journal with an exposition of their theories (even if not related to the tradition of Italian philosophy) – they include philosophers and critics such as Massimo Cacciari, Giorgio Gargani, Franco Rella, Giuseppe Sertoli and Gianni Vattimo. This first, substantial, issue is subdivided into sections: the first, devoted to "the place(s) of the subject", is followed by a second of "essays", a third of "studies", and then by "review articles" and "book reviews".

The whole journal is inspired by themes which re-emerge from article to article, such as "negative thought" and "crisis of reason"; the names most frequently mentioned to provide the cultural co-ordinates are those of Nietzsche and Heidegger. Even though the thinkers writing, or written about, often emphasize the links between literature and philosophy, the reader whose interests are mainly literary may find parts of the volume rather indigestible. The introduction by the editor, Peter Carravetta, sets the tone, with all the relevant terminology; the journal intends to provide an outlet for the diffusion in English of contemporary Italian thought "primarily in the area traditionally called philosophy and with particular emphasis on the history of ideas, social criticism, political theory, and literary studies. It will cut across these and perhaps other more local discourses in an effort to constitute loci where differences are evidenced rather than hidden". Among the most readable contributions are Vattimo's "The Problem of Subjectivity from Nietzsche to Heidegger", Sertoli's "The Seductiveness of Literature", and the essay, with interview, by J. P. Russo on Franco Rella.

Anna Laura Lepsch

OXFORD

A selection of journals from Oxford University Press

FRENCH HISTORY

Editor: Professor R. J. Bonney

Published from spring 1987, *French History* is a major new journal in this expanding area of enquiry. It brings together the work of scholars of all nationalities, presenting articles over the entire chronological range from France to the Fifth Republic. The emphasis is on French History, but the scope of the journal includes historically relevant topics from other disciplines such as art, music, literature, language and social science.

Special Offer to new subscribers: Receive Volume 1, 1987 (2 issues) FREE, when you subscribe to Volume 2, 1988 (4 issues).
Volume 2 1988: UK £35.00

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF AESTHETICS

Editor: Dr T. J. Diffey

The main purpose of this journal is to provide a medium for study of the philosophy of art and the principles of aesthetic appreciation and judgement, and this it does in the context of all the arts. It covers theoretical discussion of the principles and criteria of criticism but it does not include practical criticism in any of the arts. As well as general aesthetics, experience of both fine and applied art is examined from the point of view of the psychologist, the sociologist, the historian, the teacher and the general critic.

Volume 28, 1988: UK £30

MIND

Editor: Simon Blackburn

Mind is the best known British philosophical journal, and one of the most widely read and respected journals in professional philosophy. Founded in 1876, for over a century it has represented the leading philosophical ideas of its time.

The main aim of the journal is to continue the well-established tradition of excellence. This includes the aim of ensuring that the best philosophy is lucidly presented and open to the widest possible audience. In addition to its traditional role as a forum for original papers and discussion, *Mind* now has a major section devoted to first-class commentary on recent literature.

Volume 97, 1988: UK £18

CLASSICAL REVIEW

Editors: A. F. Garvie and Professor H. M. Hine

Founded in 1886, this journal publishes reviews of new work dealing with the literatures and civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome and can be regarded as a companion to *Classical Quarterly*. Over 200 books are reviewed each year, the full length reviews being followed by shorter notices of less important works. No other journal offers in such a convenient and concise form a critical guide to progress in the subject, and it may reasonably claim to be indispensable to all scholars in this field.

Volume 38, 1988: UK £19

CLASSICAL QUARTERLY

Editors: D. N. Sedley and T. J. Cornell

Founded in 1906, this is one of the major journals devoted to Greco-Roman antiquity in the English-speaking world. It publishes research papers and short notes in the fields of language, literature, history and philosophy and appears in May and December of every year.

Volume 38, 1988: UK £21

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JOURNALS

Inside the Emperor

Gabriel Josipovici

SIMON LEYS
La Mort de Napoléon
118pp. Paris: Hermann. 48 fr.
2 7056 6050 X

The dud poet may fool us for a while, but not the dud novelist. Within one paragraph we can tell that most novels are duds, that the author does not know what he or she is doing, has failed to make the most basic decisions. When the genuine article turns up we know it at once:

Comme il ressemblait vaguement à l'Empereur, les matelots du "Hermann-Augustus Stoeffler" l'avaient surnommé Napoléon. Aussi, pour la commodité du récit, ne l'appellerons-nous pas autrement.

Et d'ailleurs, c'était Napoléon.

Two Napoleons and one Emperor in four lines is surely not what the creative writing classes teach you. But what pleasure to read a real writer; how far we have already travelled in those four lines. And Leys keeps it up; he does not put a foot wrong in the 120-odd pages which follow.

A clever substitution has allowed Napoleon to escape. He is to travel incognito on board the Hermann-Augustus Stoeffler until it lands at Bordeaux. There plans have been made to meet him, he is simply to get off and wait. But the ship is forced to sail past Bordeaux and docks in Belgium. What is Napoleon to do? He determines to make his way to Paris and there hope to meet up with the plotters. On the way he goes for a day-trip in a coach full of English tourists to see the site of the Battle of Waterloo (which he cannot recognize), and then narrowly escapes capture at the border (he had forgotten to pay for his board in Anvers). Eventually he reaches Paris and falls in with

some of the Emperor's ex-soldiers and with a widow who sells vegetables. The business is on its last legs, but Napoleon draws up a plan of battle and soon it is thriving. He settles in with the widow. Meanwhile, the impersonator on St Helena has had the temerity to die. Napoleon is restless. He decides to speak out to his new friends who are, he knows, sympathetic to the cause; but whenever he tries to tell anyone the truth odd things happen. No one wants to hear. The widow calls the doctor. One day, in a phantasmagoric scene, one of his new friends, to whom he has finally confessed, takes him to a large enclosed garden in the centre of Paris, lets him in, and leaves him. Gradually he realizes that he is in an asylum, and one peopled by nothing but Napoleons. Clearly every third person in France is under the illusion that he is the Emperor.

It would be wrong of me to give away the dénouement. *La Mort de Napoléon* is utterly satisfying sentence by sentence and scene by scene, but it is also compulsively readable: we want, for some strange reason, to find out what happens next – "for some strange reason" because Napoleon has always seemed to me the most boring figure in history. After reading this book I think I understand why; because he has nothing but a public face. By giving us a Napoleon who cannot find how to retrieve that face, Simon Leys throws light on our universal need to bring inner and outer reality together, to understand who we really are.

That, of course, has always been the basic theme of the novel, from *Don Quixote* to *Pinner Martin*. The miracle is that it is always new if tackled by a real novelist. And Simon Leys, who is not Simon Leys but Pierre Ryckmans, yet who under the name of Simon Leys has an international reputation as a sinologist and art historian, is certainly that. This is the most exciting début since Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommes*.

Shadow on a sundial

Virginia Llewellyn Smith

JEAN ECHENOZ
L'Équipée malaise
252pp. Paris: Minuit. 68 fr.
2 7073 11111

Jean-François Pons, self-styled "duc", gérant of a Malayan rubber plantation, has astronomical ambitions. He dreams of constructing a giant sundial, with an elaborate gnomon, "d'échelle haussmannienne... une de ces gigantesques équerres étroites, percées d'alvéoles, comme il s'en trouve dans quelques villes de l'Inde du Nord...". What to build it of is his main preoccupation, until the arrival of the plantation's real owners threatens to disrupt his comfortable existence.

Le duc Pons returns to Paris to organize manpower and weaponry for a takeover bid. There he enlists his nephew Paul, who deals half-heartedly in small arms, a victim of ennui in his gleaming tower-block apartment, where the roar of the dishwasher suggests "un bouef vivisqué" bursting free from its sanitized surroundings. Paul and his partner Bob dream of finding "une fille réelle" (Paul saw one in a cinema and lit her cigarette), and of losing a bunch of Belgian gangsters, awkward dissatisfied customers. Most engaging of these is the baby-faced Toon, a Tintin warped in the cradle, hampered by unsympathetic superiors and an oversized raincoat. Another misfit, but one who lives free, a symbol of triumph over cramping conditions, is Charles, "l'homme errant", who sleeps in old crates but also on silk canapés in museums, to which he gains unproblematic access, as he does (unlike Paul) to the beds of women. Rallying to the aid of his old friend Pons, Charles with an inscrutable air of purpose bestows on his fellow-tramps inscrutable tin cans ("des petits pois, je crois"),

and joins the cargo of guns stowed away on a small boat bound for Malaya.

Life *au large*, tempest and mutiny make a certain impression on Paul, Pons and the other shipmates, but Charles functions on board merely as the *deus ex machina*. Competent and resourceful, he gives the narrative a shove forward when it needs it, and a helping hand generally: a lady with her shopping, Pons with his material problem. Make the gnomon of rubber, suggests Charles, adding diffidently: "Prévois quand-même une armature, peut-être." As the armature of the plot, and as something on which to hang heavy stuff like ideals of liberty and fraternity, Charles has about as much substance as a wire coat-hanger (for which he would find innumerable practical uses). Le duc Pons knows better what's what: "Non, pas d'armature." He envisages "un nouveau modèle de gnomon élastique, dont il contrôlerait toute variable, dont il voit déjà flotter l'ombre flexible...". At the end, after another mutiny and a couple of kidnappings, Bob's vandalized apartment (those Belgians again) reeks of burnt plastic, while *la-bas*, eternally distant, "le caoutchouc pousse en bon ordre".

Urban alienation and utopian fantasy are always with us, but they acquire a new look here through clever manipulation of words and images. Jean Echenoz can handle the lyrical and the violent: he can make even of seasickness (like it or not – you might not) something rich and strange. Like the shadow on the sundial, he invests the random with meaning, evoking a landscape, a life, in two or three lines: "Sur les toits des habitations basses, des silhouettes d'enfant tenaient en laisse des cerfs-volants trop simples, trop légers, pour porter la moindre ombre." Assembling a random note from clippings of newspaper, the banal Toon discovers the charm of literary composition. This novel transmits it.

Writing it out

Lachlan Mackinnon

Words on Water
112pp. Viking Kestrel. £5.95.
0 670 81745 7
MICHAEL MACKENZIE (Editor)
Young Words
144pp. Macmillan. Paperback, £2.95.
0 333 44569 4
FANNY DUBES, IAN DURY AND TOM PAULIN (Editors)
Hard Lines 3
77pp. Faber. Paperback, £3.50.
0 571 14645 7

Words on Water represents the Young Observer National Children's poetry competition, for which some 73,000 poems were entered. The judges' concern appears to have been with imaginative invention and clarity of perception, and, given that water was the prescribed topic, the unity within diversity of the volume is delightful. Very little here disappoints, even a five-liner by a four-year-old:

One day I saw water in the sea.
Then I thought I'd go home
And put water in my tea.
The sea goes on the sand –
The mouth drinks up the sea.

This is a book which parents and children can enjoy together. William Geldart's illustrations are apt and add to the feeling of unity. The topic focuses without constraining the imagination, and releases feelings in the young writers they might find hard to voice more directly. It also makes them look at the world. More children write poems than grow up to be writers, and it is good to see how rewarding the exercise of writing, as opposed to the old-fashioned "composition", has now become.

The composition mentality is a little more evident in *Young Words*, the outcome of the W. H. Smith Young Writers' Competition, admitting both prose and verse. No subject was prescribed, but occasionally one feels that a teacher has stepped in to do so. The verse is usually more dynamic than the prose and the criterion of judgment seems to have been the expression of feeling, a risky one in that it

invites self-expression from selves in the process of formation. It is always a teacher's dilemma whether the inchoate release of emotion or the honed but possibly colder artefact should be preferred. I appreciate the judges' problem, but the latitude given to technical incompetence, deviant punctuation and sentence structures which are neither colloquial nor poetic, is patronizing. On the other hand, the use of the children's schoolmates as illustrators is a welcome and stimulating conflation of the two arts. This is a book for teachers and aspirant writers but less, I fear, for pleasure.

Some interesting statistics emerge. *Words on Water* contains eighty-six poems, twenty-one by pupils at Halesworth Middle School, Suffolk. Very few of their names overlap with the twenty-one of their schoolmates among the 111 writers and illustrators of *Young Words*. Clearly, this is a school where something exciting is happening, and GCSE will favour the results of such inspirational teaching, as it intends to discover what the individual pupil has to offer, not what has been recalled from the teacher's presentation.

The major threat to that process is the kind of indoctrination that presumes anybody can write, that imaginative exercise is less demanding than rugby: its consequences are visible in *Hard Lines 3*. The blurb claims that the series covers "an important but previously ignored area: the work of young writers dealing, in their own way, with the present and the future" – that is, only part of what any good teacher or decent literary magazine does. It does its job badly, not helped by Tom Paulin's preface, which speaks of "poems and prose pieces that don't cheer or chorp or get chippy". Self-congratulatory self-pity predominates in this lamentable collection, in which the best pieces are by women, usually elegiac or lesbian, speaking from genuinely marginal positions. Social commitment seems to have been the primary criterion for inclusion, together with an evasion of traditional form even more pronounced than in the children's volumes. Dim rock lyrics are the model, and how a songwriter as usually as Ian Dury could lend his name to this exploitative, unimaginative exercise is beyond me.

Ready-made runes

John Clute

ROBIN MCKINLEY (Editor)
Imaginary Lands
246pp. Julia MacRae. £8.95.
0 86203 280 6

In her introduction to *Imaginary Lands*, managing to sound simultaneously fey and brazen, Robin McKinley first tells us how two New York editors vied to purchase her proposed anthology of original fantasy stories to be composed with "a particularly strong sense of location", then goes on to admit that "not many of the stories" in the finished volume actually fit her original specifications. It is not difficult to confirm this. Only one of the contributions to *Imaginary Lands* – not, incidentally, the author's own effort – is about an imaginary land, rather a puzzling one, with a wide mixture of age-ranges and styles. From the English tradition of funny writers, she has chosen Saki's "The Lull", an extract from Blandings Castle, the episode in *Hampton Court* maze from *Three Men in a Boat* and brief glimpses of Just William and Molesworth. From contemporary authors she provides samples from Keith Waterhouse, Helen Cresswell, Gene Kemp, Diana Wynne Jones and Mary Hooper. There is a mixture of stories portraying a semi-realistic modern world (problem parents, head-lice, shop-lifting) and a more timeless comic universe (fancy-dress parties, water-pistols, stamp collections). Diana Wynne Jones, whose story "Enna Hitims" is a fantasy rather than a comic tale, is the only author to rise above the common-place.

Lacking dates, supportive material on the writers or suggested further reading, the volume's erratic footnotes convert sums of money to decimal coinage and gloss Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as "demons". Elizabeth Barry

drab entry, "Tam Lin" by Joan D. Vinge, "Evan Steel" by Jane Yolen, which dips rather gingerly into Arthurian legend, "Stranger Blood" by P. C. Hodgell, which is not very readable, and "The Old Woman and the Storm" by Patricia A. McKillip all give off a vague stale Celtic aroma terribly familiar to readers of contemporary American fantasy, whether written for teenagers or adults. Menarche bulks large in stories of this sort, and euphemized sex. The landscapes come ready-made: hills, streams, mist, gnarled trees, runes, sacred groves, sheep. But there is really nothing, in these imaginary lands, to remark upon.

Jennifer Kavanagh's selection of eleven stories for *The Methuen Book of Humorous Stories* (123pp, Methuen, £6.95, 0 416 50610 0) is rather a puzzling one, with a wide mixture of age-ranges and styles. From the English tradition of funny writers, she has chosen Saki's "The Lull", an extract from Blandings Castle, the episode in *Hampton Court* maze from *Three Men in a Boat* and brief glimpses of Just William and Molesworth. From contemporary authors she provides samples from Keith Waterhouse, Helen Cresswell, Gene Kemp, Diana Wynne Jones and Mary Hooper. There is a mixture of stories portraying a semi-realistic modern world (problem parents, head-lice, shop-lifting) and a more timeless comic universe (fancy-dress parties, water-pistols, stamp collections). Diana Wynne Jones, whose story "Enna Hitims" is a fantasy rather than a comic tale, is the only author to rise above the common-place.

Lacking dates, supportive material on the writers or suggested further reading, the volume's erratic footnotes convert sums of money to decimal coinage and gloss Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as "demons". Elizabeth Barry

The balnear and the banal

Dan Gunn

JEAN-PHILIPPE TOUSSAINT
La Salle de bain
123pp. Paris: Minuit. 39fr.
2 7073 1028 X
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111pp. Paris: Minuit. 39fr.
2 7073 1096 4

In so short a novel as *Monsieur*, the few pages given to discussion of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity amount to epistemological scaffolding. A characteristically succinct paragraph draws the conclusion that: "Tout était selon." The scaffolding may be supporting the structure of Toussaint's novel, or it may be obscuring it (or perhaps both). But it also has one incidental consequence: it gives some credence to the rumour that the chronology of Toussaint's two works to date (which together have made him one of the most discussed of young French writers) is "selon"; or in other words misleading; and that *La Salle de bain*, published first, was in fact written later. Whatever is the case, after the disappointment of *Monsieur*, the reader is likely to return to *La Salle de bain* to confirm that behind the scaffolding is an original and significant writer, whose fiction can be as engaging as it is surprising.

Returning to the bathroom is in fact one of the things that *La Salle de bain* is about. The novel opens with a young man who has taken to spending his afternoons in the bathtub in his flat in Paris. After much hesitation and interruption, he subsequently decides to leave it and make a trip to Venice. But eventually, after playing darts in his hotel-room for days on end (and hitting his girlfriend with a dart) he returns to Paris and his tub. But only to leave it again the next day, in the final line of the novel... A circular narrative? Perhaps; though the narrator, who is fascinated by geometry, has no taste for circles, preferring the figures of triangle and rectangle.

There are many questions the novel begs. Why geometry? Why the geometrical preference? Why the journey? Why the sudden violence against the loved one? Toussaint does

not offer any answers, or even clues. His novel is largely constructed out of what it does not say or do. A series of some 170 numbered paragraphs (and as many blank spaces), the novel – which borrows its epigraph from Pythagoras on the triangle – is divided into three sections entitled: "Paris", "L'Hypoténuse", "Paris". And within this formalized, triangular fiction, there is no development, no real dialogue, no psychology, (virtually) no metaphor or explanation. Toussaint's is in one sense a depopulated and static world: like that of the bathroom with its ceramic tiles, or that of the painter Mondrian, whose rectangles the narrator so admires.

Behind the questions begged and unanswered there is, however, a very particular look, or gaze ("vision" is too ponderous a word), which the narrator is casting upon his bathroom and his existence. Or rather, in the novel there are several ways of looking, of which the geometrist's is only one. Others, as far from formalism or immobility as is imaginable, can reveal such varied phenomena as the fascination of everyday objects, or the incomprehensibility of human purposes. These ways of seeing are quite remarkable for their tightness and mobility. The narrator lies in his bath, and tries to see the crack in the wall expand, or his beard grow in the mirror. He discusses the two ways of watching the rain fall. In Venice, he ignores the canals, and looks at the pattern of his dashboard. He jumps down steps to make the city sink another millimetre into the sea.

The freshness of the world as the narrator perceives it goes hand-in-hand with his self-interested innocence, which leads him inevitably into burlesque situations. But the central humour of the novel comes from the look itself, which makes fiction out of the wondrous oddity of the banal. To the various ways of looking correspond the precision, concision and sheer unpredictability of the voices which seem to be speaking through Toussaint's prose. These are the more seductive in that Toussaint avoids ostensible strangeness or rhetorical flourishes in his style; preferring to transform the world the more radically by drawing humour from formal, static sentences. He at once extracts the odd from the familiar, and the familiar from the odd.

Assis sur mon lit, le dos contre un oreiller, je lisais. La porte d'entrée claqua, je relevai la tête. Un instant plus tard, Edmondson apparaissait, le visage rayonnant. Elle voulait faire l'amour.

14) Maintenant.

15) Faire l'amour maintenant? Je refermai mon livre posément, laissant un doigt entre deux feuilles pour me garder la page.

But if this peculiar quality of Toussaint's style is his most attractive achievement (and what distinguishes him from many of his more heavyweight compatriots), it is also the area in which he takes the greatest risk. For if his novel is to draw the reader, its style must be consistently unpredictable; since there is so little in the way of development or psychology, a mere two paragraphs of straight telling or everyday accounting can become a *longueur*. The banal, in such instances, remains banal, without the scaffolding of plot or character. And the alternative scaffolding provided by geometry becomes imposing, or downright meddlesome. This is the case in the third section of the novel (the third side of the triangle). For here the prose declines into description, and the play of the narrator's various observing selves is flattened out into a single indifferent spectator. *Pace* Pythagoras, the square of the hypotenuse is not equal of the sum of the square of the other two sides. Or more simply and unfortunately: *La Salle de bain* is not the sum of its parts.

The scaffolding around *Monsieur* is that of physics, but it involves the look none the less, which is described as what upsets scientific experiments, depriving them of absolute objectivity. "Everything is according to." And that this is so is borne out by the fact that even though *Monsieur* is himself a dispassionate nobody, and even though his life is told in a decidedly analytic prose, both man and novel are very quirky. *Monsieur* is a "diary of a nobody" that embraces the banality of a life while highlighting the fact that even a banal life, austere, told, can never be truly banal.

Being amorphous, *Monsieur* finds himself in situations which are almost as burlesque as those in *La Salle de bain* (but Toussaint makes even less of an attempt to place them together into a plot). He is rejected by his fiancée, but

adopted by her parents. He is cajoled by a neighbour who is a crystallographer to type up his tedious book (crystals are as important to *Monsieur* as tiles to *La Salle de bain*). He finds himself with a date in a black-out near Odéon; on his rooftop, comparing the sky to a map of the Métro, placing stars as stations.

The moment on the rooftop is indeed a beautiful one, but it is also uncharacteristic, and in a way that leads to the problem in *Monsieur*. For the moment is beautiful in the apology it draws (which implies an intense subjectivity doing the drawing); where in the bulk of the novel, the world as it is – sheer surface to be observed – is more than enough for *Monsieur* (and for his author as well). The problem is one of distance. For where *La Salle de bain* is told in the first person, by a narrator who is constantly surprising as his world is banal, *Monsieur* is told in the third person, by a narrator who, because more distant, is also more disappointingly similar to the "Monsieur" who is described. The multiple inner voices of *La Salle de bain* are largely drowned out here by the homogeneous "scientific" tone of the narrator. *Monsieur* does make himself heard from time to time ("Hip, hop", he interjects), but too rarely to give the novel more than a fluttering life. The point is taken: that the looking of and at *Monsieur* are not objective. But this does not mean they are subjective in a way that automatically engages the reader's attention. This nobody is not "somebody" simply because nobody is nobody.

One of the legacies of France's colonial rule in Vietnam is the small body of literature written (and still being produced) in French. In *The Vietnamese Novel in French: A literary response to colonialism* (237pp. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, £20, 0 816 382 0), Jack A. Yeager examines these writings, which have remained virtually unknown despite attention recently paid to Francophone literatures from Québec, black Africa and the Maghreb. Indigenous response to Western influences caused in Vietnam, Yeager says, a telescoping of Occidental literary history: from pre-modern *romans courts* (romances) through romanticism to realism and social realism into a few short decades.

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J. H. C. Leach TLS 8th August 1986

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